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A-League Round 24 Friday 9th Mar - Sunday 11th Mar 2012

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THE FINAL COUNTDOWN!

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Aussie clubs embark on Asian adventure

Roar meet their match; Reds and Mariners surprise away

Roar 0-2 FC Tokyo

By Jarrod Ellis

Brisbane Roar's Asian Champions League campaign got off to a less than desirable start on Tuesday night as they were defeated 2-0 by FC Tokyo at the AFC designated "Brisbane Stadium".

The visitors thoroughly deserved their victory but the Roar can take heart from the fact that they were far from embarrassed. Brisbane was first brought undone on the stroke of half-time by a Tatsuya Yazawa strike. A second was then added midway through the second half by Ariajusuru Hasegawa to give Tokyo a 2-0 lead and complete what was ultimately a disappointing evening for the Roar.

The match marked the first appearance in the competition for both sides, Brisbane having qualified courtesy of their A-League Championship whilst FC Tokyo earned their own place by claiming the Emperor's Cup in late January.

Brisbane was without key midfielder Mitch Nichols for the match after he failed to recover from a groin injury suffered in the match against Melbourne Heart on the weekend.

His presence could have perhaps aided in unlocking the impressive FC Tokyo defence, Brisbane failing to register a shot in the opening forty-five minutes.

The J-League season is still yet to kick off and if Brisbane were expecting Tokyo to show a lack of match sharpness that belief was quickly allayed.

Tokyo began the match displaying plenty of energy and discipline, pressing Brisbane very high up the pitch, a tactic that has given the Roar considerable trouble this season.

The first effort on goal came in the 4th minute, Kazuma Watanabe having a turn and shot inside the box but it was a tame effort and Michael Theoklitos got down to save well.

The home side showed their patience in the early stages, content to work the ball around the backline as they waited for an opportunity to present itself.

A poor pass from Matt Smith almost allowed the Japanese side in on goal in the 10th minute. Sayed Mohammed Adnan was left exposed as he moved forward in an attempt to meet the ball. The Bahraini was unable to maintain possession and Brisbane were ultimately lucky to escape without conceding as the visitors broke towards goal.

With both sides displaying compact, disciplined defences shots were at a premium and Brisbane's best chance of the half came from a Thomas Broich free-kick. Tokyo keeper Shuichi Gonda misjudged the flight of the ball into the box and conceded a corner after a flailing punch almost turned the ball into his own net.

Just as it appeared the two sides would exit the field with the score level FC Tokyo capitalised on a stroke of good fortune to take the lead.

A deflection off the foot of Erik Paartalu fell kindly to Yuhei Tokunaga and his cross found Tatsuya Yazawa in the box. The striker's near post finish secured the advantage for his side only moments before the whistle for the half.

Brisbane began the second half with a renewed vigour and it wasn't long until they registered a shot, Berisha laying the ball off to Henrique in the Tokyo penalty area but the winger's shot was blocked by a sliding tackle.

Despite showing renewed energy Brisbane found themselves 2-0 down in the 57th minute. The move began when Hanyu Naotake sprang the offside trap and dribbled unchallenged inside the box. Theoklitos covered the danger well, saving Hanyu's shot but wasn't able to hold onto it and after deflecting off Matt Smith the ball fell to the feet of Hasegawa who had no trouble putting the ball into an effectively empty net.

Ange Postecoglou rang the changes shortly after conceding, introducing Kofi Danning and Luke Brattan in place of Rocky Visconte and Massimo Murdocca respectively.

The substitutions failed to bring about any great change in the flow of the match and Brisbane's frustration at being unable to break down a resolute Tokyo defence began to show. Both Franjic and Shane Steffanutto conceded yellow cards, the latter for a lazy handball as Tokyo continued to have the better of proceedings.

Adnan headed over from a Broich free kick in the 82nd minute in what was Brisbane's only chance of note before for the final whistle.

Overall an encouraging performance from Brisbane but they will need to improve if they're to progress past the first round group stage.

Post-match, coach Postecoglou paid tribute to the visitors and when reflecting on his own side's performance, backed his players and improve their own performances in their remaining ACL fixtures.

"We've taken a first step in this competition - it's a tentative step at best but it's still a first step," he said.

"There's still five games to go and I have a feeling we'll get better and better as the tournament goes on.

"I'm very confident that as each game comes along, we'll get more of an understanding of the level we need to play."

Brisbane Roar 0
Fc Tokyo 2 (Yazawa 46' Hasegawa 57')
Tuesday, 6 March 2012
Brisbane Stadium, Brisbane
Referee: Kovalenko Valentin
Crowd: 12037

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theoklitos (Gk), 2. Matt Smith (C), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 6. Erik Paartalu, 7. Besart Berisha, 8. Massimo Murdocca 10. Henrique, 14. Rocky Visconte, 16. Sayed Mohamed Adnan, 22. Thomas Broich
Subs: 4. Matthew Jurman, 9. Kofi Danning, 18. Luke Brattan, 19. Jack Hingert, 20. Andrew Redmayne, 21. James Meyer, 24. Nick FitzgeralD

Brisbane Roar came undone 0-2 in their opening ACL fixture against the J-League's FC Tokyo. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Reds score stunning win in Tashkent

Bunyodkor 0-2 AUFC

By Nic Kerber

Adelaide United FC has started its AFC Champions League 2012 in stunning fashion by toppling four time Uzbek league champions Bunyodkor 2-1 at Jar Stadium.

An exceptional disciplined defensive performance from the Reds was capped off by two cracking counter punching goals that left the home side searching for answers and gave United an ideal platform heading into the remainder of the Group Stage.

As they have done numerous times in past campaigns, the Reds continue to defy the odds and refuse to follow the script in the prestigious Asian club competition as Nigel Boogaard gave United the dream start in the 11th minute before Antony Golec completed a superb counter attacking move ** into the second half to make it 2-nil.

Kamoliddin Murzoev pegged a goal back for the home side late in stoppage time but it was not going to spoil the celebrations as the Reds made it two wins from three meetings against Bunyodkor and in the process became the first team to put two goals past the Uzbek club at home in the AFC Champions League.

"In the first half we were obviously dropping off a little bit to give us the opportunity to keep our shape and because we didn't want to go too far forward because it might have caused us a few problems," Luciano Trani said in his post game assessment.

"In the second half Bunyodkor played very well but we defended really well. It was a disciplined performance and the players showed a lot of character."

On the same pitch that fielded the Olympic qualifier between Uzbekistan and Australia in snow weeks earlier, Bunyodkor won a couple of early free kicks in dangerous positions but the Reds' defence and Eugene Galekovic diffused the threats.

Former Sydney FC and now current Bunyodkor winger David Carney was starting to put his stamp on the game, but the Australian's radar was off target as he unloaded a couple shots from distance.

Boogaard and Osama Malik both produced crucial tackles and blocks in their own penalty area as the home side turned up the urgency but the Reds would also still ask questions at the other end, Vidosic stinging the gloves of Nesterov from long range.

Bunyodkor coach Mirdjalal Kasimov went to his bench for his final two substitutions and they immediately lifted the home side to another gear but the Reds' defence was not buckling.

Aware that Bunyodkor has developed a reputation of scoring late on in games, Galekovic stepped up to keep the Reds' lead in tact, first saving from Shavkat Salomov and then tipping over a curling Karpenko effort.

The Reds were being forced to absorb a wave of Bunyodkor pressure and Galekovic was at his best again to deny Bahodir Pardaev when he appeared destined to score, while Jon McKain's late steadying influence in his first appearance since returning from a knee injury in the final five minutes was also significant.

Considering the intent and desire the Reds had played with, it would almost have been fitting that they came away with a clean sheet but they would have to be satisfied with a 2-1 score line as Bunyodkor broke through in stoppage time.

The Reds now return home to prepare for a Hyundai A-League encounter against Brisbane Roar at Suncorp Stadium on Sunday. Adelaide United's next AFC Champions League match is at home against Gamba Osaka, who went down 3-0 to the Pohang Steelers in the other completed game in Group E.

Match Details
Bunyodkor 1 (Murzoev 90+4')
Adelaide United Fc 2 (Boogaard 12', Golec 53')
Crowd: 7,000 @ Jar Stadium

Adelaide United Line-Up: 1.Eugene Galekovic (Gk) (C), 2.Osama Malik, 3.Nigel Boogaard, 5.Daniel Mullen, 7.Zenon Caravella (21.Francisco Usucar 72'), 10.Dario Vidosic, 11.Bruce Djite (9.Sergio Van Dijk 62'), 12.Antony Golec, 14.Cameron Watson, 17.Iain Ramsay, 18.Fabian Barbiero (4.Jon Mckain 85')

Gutsy Mariners earn solid start

Tianjin 0-0 Mariners

By Ben O'Neill

IN the lead up to Central Coast Mariners' second foray in Asia's premier club competition, the AFC Champions League, Head Coach Graham Arnold stressed the need for the club to do Australian football proud.

On Wednesday night in at ice cold Tianjin Teda Football Stadium, the Yellow and Navy undoubtedly earned the respect of many Australian football followers, taking the game to their hosts in adverse conditions to get their Group G campaign off to a solid start.

The 0-0 stalemate wasn't precisely the result Arnold desired – he always stated the Mariners were heading to Tianjin to win – but a point away from home in front of a partisan crowd was enough to satisfy the wily former Qantas Socceroos mentor, who understands how vital any points away from home can prove to be in the final Group reckoning.

"I thought we played a fantastic game," Arnold said. "After playing on Saturday in Australia and travelling for 22 hours with only two days here in Tianjin I thought it was a fantastic performance from my team. I was very proud of the way that we played. We definitely competed very well with a very good Tianjin team."

Macedonian international and new Teda signing Veliche Shumulikoski could have earned cult status among the purple and white faithful in the 60th minute. However, the midfielder chose to attempt to chip Ryan when a powerful strike would perhaps have been the better option. Alert as ever, Ryan plucked the ball from the sky the keep scores level.

Tomas Rogic was introduced into the game for Amini with 25 minutes to play and immediately looked like he could posses the X-Factor the Mariners might need to steal all three points. At the heart of the majority of the Mariners' best work for the final portions of the match, Rogic looked a comfortable at AFC Champions League level.

However despite the match seesawing from end-to-end as the clock wound down, neither Arnold's men nor Kuze's team could find a goal to kill off their opponents. Bernie Ibini's effort in added time struck a desperate Teda defender and drifted away for a corner.

After referee Abdullah Mohamed Al Hilali and his assistants from Oman called time on the match, Arnold praised Tianjin Teda's style of play, as well as the emerging Chinese Super League.

"I think they will have a successful season, I think that Tianjin is a very good team. They have a wonderful coach in Josip Kuze and he will do very well," he said.

"I was very impressed with the way they played football. I think the team balance and structure overall was very good, and they are a very very strong team.

I think it shows that Chinese football is going to be very very strong, and it will be one of the powerhouse leagues in Asia with the J-League very soon."

And Arnold reiterated his praise for his teams' effort.

"But I am very proud because I don't know if the journalists know but we had four 19-year-olds on the field, we're a very young team, and we had four 19-year-olds who did excellent tonight," he concluded.

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SOCCER Fever

Qantas Socceroos are the top seeds going into the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round draw

The Qantas Socceroos will be the top seeds going into the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round draw after being named the highest ranked men's team in Asia following the special release of the FIFA World Ranking.

Currently sitting on 868 points, following their recent 4-2 victory over Saudi Arabia in Melbourne, the Qantas Socceroos are followed by the Korea Republic who have jumped into second position in Asia on 751 points after their 2-0 win over Kuwait. Japan has dropped to third place due to their 1-0 loss to Uzbekistan at home. The only other change to the FIFA World Ranking order from the previous release is that Qatar has overtaken Oman.

The ten Asian teams that have qualified for the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round will be divided into 5 pots, according to their rankings as determined by the latest FIFA World Rankings, with the top two teams in Asia placed into Pot 1, the teams ranked 3 & 4 into Pot 2 and so forth. The final pot allocation will see the Qantas Socceroos & the Korea Republic placed in Pot 1, Japan & Iran in Pot 2, Uzbekistan & Iraq in Pot 3, Jordan & Qatar in Pot 4 and Oman & Lebanon in Pot 5.

The draw procedure will begin with Pot 2, the pot containing Japan. The first ball drawn out of Pot 2 will be placed into A2 and the second ball drawn will be placed into B2. However if Japan is drawn first, they will take position A5 or B5 if drawn second to allow for them to participate at the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup which will be held from 16-30 June 2013.

The next stage will see the balls from Pot 5 drawn with the first ball drawn from Pot 5 placed in the lowest position of Group A. The second ball drawn from Pot 5 will be placed in the lowest available position in Group B. The same procedure will then be applied for Pot 4, Pot 3 & Pot 1 respectively.

The first match day of the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round will be on 3 June 2012 with the final match day on 18 June 2013. The top two teams from each group will progress directly to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The two third placed teams from each group will meet in a play-off over two match days (6 & 10 September 2013) with the winner over two legs to face the a CONMEBOL team on 15 October 2013 and 19 November 2013 with the winner of that fixture over two legs progressing to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

The draw for the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round will be made at 4pm MST (7pm AEDT) on Friday 9 March 2012 at AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (4:00pm local, 7:00pm AEDT) and will be broadcast Live and Exclusive on Fox Sports News in Australia.

The next stage of the World Cup qualifiers will commence in earnest.

Road To Rio Number Crunch

FIFA World Rankings of the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers Fourth Round teams (7 March 2012)

Rankings FIFA	AFC	Team	15 Feb	7 March
20	1	Australia	832	868
30	2	Korea Republic	714	751
33	3	Japan	762	740
51	4	Iran	606	574
67	5	Uzbekistan	455	502
76	7	Iraq	439	460
83	8	Jordan	431	420
88	9	Qatar	372	388
92	11	Oman	377	381
124	17	Lebanon	299	270

2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers – Fourth Round – Pot Allocations

Pot 1
Rank 1: Australia
Rank 2: Korea Republic

Pot 2
Rank 3: Japan
Rank 4: Iran

Pot 3
Rank 5: Uzbekistan
Rank 6: Iraq

Pot 4
Rank 7: Jordan
Rank 8: Qatar

Pot 5
Rank 9: Oman
Rank 10: Lebanon

Socceroo Fourth Round fixtures

Sunday, 3 June 2012	Australia - Bye
Friday, 8 June 2012	4 v Australia
Tuesday, 11 Sept 2012	3 v Australia
Tuesday, 16 Oct 2012	2 v Australia
Wednesday, 14 Nov 2012	Australia - Bye
Tuesday, 26 March 2013	Australia v 4
Tuesday, 4 June 2013	5 v Australia
Tuesday, 11 June 2013	Australia v 3
Tuesday, 18 June 2013	Australia v 2

Asian Play-off
6 September 2013
3rd place team of Group A v 3rd place team of Group B
10 September 2013
3rd place team of Group B v 3rd place team of Group A

Intercontinental Play-Off*
15 October 2013 AFC v CONMEBOL
19 November 2013 CONMEBOL v AFC

Vale Alec Duncan

Football Federation Australia was saddened to hear that one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Socceroo, Alec Duncan, recently passed away at the age of 92.

Alec's parents came from Scotland but he was born in Australia in 1920. He played his club football in Ipswich with Bundamba and Eastern Suburbs. He became the 109th Socceroo when represented Australia against New Zealand in Wellington in 1948 and then played against South Africa in Brisbane in 1955. There is photographic evidence too that he was a member of other Australian squads including the team which played against England in Brisbane in 1951.

He was captain of the Queensland State team against South China Athletic Association in 1955 and played against New Zealand in Brisbane in 1964. He also played in a number of representative intra-state matches in Queensland during his career.

He was presented with his commemorative cap at a function at Suncorp Stadium in 2010 during the AFC Asian Cup qualifier between the Qantas Socceroos and Indonesia. This recognition was much appreciated by Alec and his family. His grandson, Sam Peterson, points out, quite rightly, that the 1940s and 1950s are a much under researched period in Australia's football history and so players like Alec Duncan, Cliff Sander, Gordon 'Bunny' Nunn and several others are not as well known as they might be.

Alec is survived by his daughter Anne and sons Lex & Neil as well as grandchildren, Matthew, Todd, Sam, Ruth, Merendi & Scott.

Alec's funeral will be held at Hemmant crematorium, (Cnr Hemmant &Tingalpa Rd, Hemmant) at 3pm on Friday 9th March 2012.

Victory To Harness The Power of Youth

Anthony di Peitro and Richard Wilson declared that Melbourne Victory would be venturing into uncharted waters, with new youth teams - as young as under 13 squads - being initiated as soon as next year.

Speaking at the now annual member's forum, the Victory board members explained how the plans were a FFA initiative, and that the new youth teams would compete in elite Football Federation Victoria (FFV) tournaments, alongside existing elite junior squads. Currently, the Victory, along with every other A-League side bar Wellington, only have a National Youth League (NYL) side, which has produced first team players such as Jimmy Jeggo, Diogo Ferrera and Petar Franjic.

Di Peitro also outlined how the managers at both senior and NYL level would have active involvement in the running of all youth squads, in the aim that the transition for a youth player into the senior squad was smoother.

Another key development to come out of the forum was that Matthew Kemp would be fined "the maximum" fine for his reaction to be substituted against Newcastle Jets last Saturday. Magilton said that the fine was of exemplary nature as he swore that something like this "would never happen again."

Vidmar names U23 Squad

Qantas Australian Under 23s Head Coach Aurelio Vidmar has selected an 18-player squad for the upcoming AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Olympic Games – Third Round match against Iraq which will be played at Central Coast Stadium, Gosford on Wednesday 14 March 2012 (Kick-off 7:30pm AEDT).

Zac Anderson (Gold Coast United), Nick Fitzgerald (Brisbane Roar), Craig Goodwin (Melbourne Heart), Chris Harold (Gold Coast United), James Jeggo (Melbourne Victory), Mitchell Mallia (Sydney FC), Jacob Pepper (Newcastle Jets), Josh Risdon (Perth Glory), Tom Rogic (Central Coast Mariners) and Lawrence Thomas (Melbourne Victory) have all received their first call-up to the Qantas Australian U23s for the current campaign.

Although unable to qualify for the 2012 London Olympic Games, Vidmar is confident that his team can go out of the competition on a positive note.

"It is obvious that mathematically we can't qualify for the Olympic Games, but that doesn't change the fact that this is an international match that we want to win.

"We have also selected the current group of players with the upcoming inaugural AFC U22 Asian Championship in mind to give them some valuable competitive international match experience.

"Although we will only have a limited preparation, I am sure that the boys will be looking to finish the campaign with a positive result," concluded Vidmar

Both the Qantas Australian U23s and Iraq are out of contention to qualify for the 2012 London Olympic Games, but in the other group match Uzbekistan will need to defeat the UAE in Tashkent to guarantee direct passage to the Olympics.

U23 Squad v Iraq

Zac ANDERSON *Gold Coast United*
Mark BIRIGHITTI *(gk) Adelaide United*
Kofi DANNING *Brisbane Roar*
Nicholas FITZGERALD *Brisbane Roar*
Sam GALLAGHER *CC Mariners*
Craig GOODWIN *Melbourne Heart*
Rhyan GRANT *Sydney FC*
Brendan HAMILL *Melbourne Heart*
Chris HAROLD *Gold Coast United*
Bernie IBINI *Central Coast Mariners*
James JEGGO *Melbourne Victory*
Ben KANTAROVSKI *Newcastle Jets*
Mitchell MALLIA *Sydney FC*
Jacob PEPPER *Newcastle Jets*
Dimitrios PETRATOS *Sydney FC*
Joshua RISDON *Perth Glory*
Tom ROGIC *Central Coast Mariners*
Lawrence THOMAS *(gk) Melb Victory*

Match Details

AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Games – Third Round
Qantas Australian U23s v Iraq
Central Coast Stadium, Gosford
Wednesday, 14 March 2012
Kick-off: 7:30pm
Gates Open 6.30pm

Ticket Prices
Adult $20.00
Concession/Child $10.00
Family $40.00

SHORT PASSES

HATZIMOURATIS SIGNS WITH SMFC

South Melbourne FC is pleased to announce the signing of youngster Dimitri Hatzimouratis.

The attacking player comes to the club having previously played with Alki Larnaca in the Cypriot First Division, while South fans will remember him playing for Western Suburbs, Melbourne Knights and Melbourne Victory Youth teams in Australia.

Dimitri will bring an extra attacking option to the squad and with his blistering pace and ability to finish, he is expected to support new signing Trent Rixon up front.

South has also signed goalkeeper Peter Gavalas for the 2012 Victorian Premier League season.

Gavalas arrives at South from fellow Victorian Premier League side Bentleigh Greens, where he excelled as goalkeeper for the Greens. The experienced Gavalas has been around the Victorian Premier League for several seasons now, having also played for Heidelberg United in the past.

He is seen as the ideal first choice goalkeeper for the Club, with 2011 first choice keeper Zaim Zeneli being given permission to move on. Matthew Kemp sanctioned

KEMP SANCTIONED

Melbourne Victory Football Club wishes to advise that defender, Matthew Kemp, has been sanctioned for what it regards as unacceptable behavior when leaving the pitch, during last Saturday night's loss to the Newcastle Jets.

In line with FFA regulations, the club has fined Matthew an undisclosed amount and he has also been suspended for one match.

GEORGIES MAKE SIGNINGS

Sunshine George Cross continues to strengthen their squad with the signing of Steve Martin from V.P.L. club Heidelberg United and Englishman Tom Cahill.

Thirty one year old midfielder Steve Martin comes to the club with a wealth of experience having played as a youngster in the National Soccer league with Carlton and Parramatta Power.

He has also played in the Victorian Premier League with Green Gully, Bulleen Zebras, Whittlesea Zebras. At Bulleen, Steve was a member of the 2004 V.P.L. Championship winning team, and he also played in the 2007 V.P.L. Grand Final for Whittlesea where the Zebras lost 3-1 to Preston Lions. He will add guile to the Georgie midfield this season.

Sunshine George Cross is also pleased to announce the signing of 25 year old striker Tom Cahill. Tom's has played with Rotherham United and his last club in England was AFC Fylde where he scored 24 goals. He has impressed in trial matches where he has displayed skill, strength and awareness in attack.

The club is also pleased with the stability and progress the team has made under new coach Tony Ciantar and his assistant Paul Donnelly.

Both are getting maximum effort from every player, with players knowing they have to pull out all stops to win their place in the team this season.

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SCOREBOARD

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Central Coast Mariners	24	13	6	5	37	22	15	45
2 Brisbane Roar	24	12	6	6	45	25	20	42
3 Wellington Phoenix	24	12	3	9	32	26	6	39
4 Perth Glory	24	11	4	9	35	30	5	37
5 Melbourne Heart	24	9	7	8	31	30	1	34
6 Newcastle Jets	24	10	4	10	34	35	-1	34
7 Sydney FC	24	8	7	9	31	38	-7	31
8 Melbourne Victory	24	5	11	8	30	38	-8	26
9 Adelaide United	24	5	8	11	24	41	-17	23
10 Gold Coast United	24	3	8	13	25	39	-14	17

THIS WEEK

Week 25	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Fri 9 Mar 2012	Newcastle Jets v Gold Coast United	Ausgrid Stadium	8:00pm	8:00pm
Sat 10 Mar 2012	Melbourne Heart v Wellington Phoenix	AAMI Park	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat 10 Mar 2012	Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory	Sydney Football Stadium	7:45pm	7:45pm
Sun 11 Mar 2012	Brisbane Roar v Adelaide United	Suncorp Stadium	4:00pm	5:00pm
Sun 11 Mar 2012	Perth Glory v Central Coast Mariners	nib Stadium	4:30pm	7:30pm

NEXT WEEK

Week 26	Fixture	Venue	Local	AEDT
Fri 16 Mar 2012	Melbourne Victory v Wellington Phoenix	AAMI Park	8:00pm	8:00pm
Sat 17 Mar 2012	Central Coast Mariners v Adelaide United	Bluetongue Stadium	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat 17 Mar 2012	Melbourne Heart v Sydney FC	AAMI Park	7:45pm	7:45pm
Sun 18 Mar 2012	Newcastle Jets v Brisbane Roar	Ausgrid Stadium	4:00pm	4:00pm
Sun 18 Mar 2012	Gold Coast United v Perth Glory	Skilled Park	5:30pm	6:30pm

ROUND 24 RESULTS

Wellington Phoenix 2
(Durante 29, Ward 90)
Gold Coast United 0

Sydney 1
(Chianese 56)
Central Coast 1
(Hearfield 91)
Crowd: 8658

Brisbane Roar: 1
(Nichols 32)
Melbourne Heart: 1
(Good 49)
Crowd: 9998

Adelaide United 0
Perth Glory 2
(Mehmet 6, Burns 24)
5,898 at Hindmarsh Stadium

Melbourne Victory 1 *(*
Kewell 24p)
Newcastle Jets 3
(Griffiths 20, Pepper 29, 39)

TOP GOAL SCORERS

17 - Besart Berisha (Roar)
9 - Shane Smeltz (Glory), Jeremy Brockie (Jets), Ryan Griffiths (Jets),
8 - Harry Kewell (Victory), Carlos Hernandez (Victory), Mitch Nichols (Roar),
7- Bruno Cazarine (SFC), Matt Simon (Mariners), Archie Thompson (Victory),

Mitch Nichols moves up one spot on the charts after scoring for Roar in the 1-1 draw with Heart.

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK ROUND 24

Compiled by Steven Talevski

GK: Clint Bolton – Bolton made a fantastic penalty save from Mohamed Adnan in injury time along with continuously denying Besart Berisha in the Heart's important one all draw away to Brisbane Roar.

RB: Manny Muscat – The Maltese international had a solid game for the Phoenix as he made himself a dangerous threat with his great runs down the wing.

CB: Nikolai Topor-Stanley – Topor-Stanley was instrumental in helping the Newcastle Jets to the three points against the Victory by making some telling interceptions in defence.

CB: Bas van den Brink – The Dutchman had a solid game in defence for the Glory helping them to a clean sheet in their impressive win away from home against Adelaide United.

LB: Andrew Durante – The Phoenix captain scored his second goal in the A-League while also helping Wellington to a clean sheet in the two nil victory over the Gold Coast

CM: Jacob Burns – The eleven time Socceroo marshalled the Perth midfield and scored a stunning left foot volley in the Glory's two nil victory.

CM: Jacob Pepper – Pepper makes it a pairing of Jacobs in the centre of midfield after he snuck up twice in the Jet's attacking penalty area to score his first two goals in the A-League as the Jets all but ended the Victory's finals hopes.

RAM: Ruban Zadkovich – The Jets midfielder had a great game supporting the Jets attack as he played two solid crosses into Ryan Griffiths and Jacob Pepper for the Jet's first and third goals in their 3-1 victory away to Melbourne Victory.

LAM: Nick Carle – After making a late appearance for the Socceroos mid-week, Carle returned to his club side and played well against local rivals Central Coast where he earned an assist in Joel Chinese's goal in Sydney's one all draw with the Mariners.

ST: Joel Chianese – The young Sydney FC striker scored his second goal for the club and worked hard up front in the local derby against Central Coast.

ST: Billy Mehmet – He may have scored a controversial goal this week but the Glory target man sure did set the tempo in Adelaide as Perth handed Adelaide a two nil defeat.

Star Man

Jacob Pepper
Newcastle Jets

The young Jets midfielder had a game to remember against the Melbourne Victory as he scored his first two goals of his professional career.
Pepper continues to make strides after his debut last season and has notched up eleven starts this season.
Pepper's hard work has not gone unnoticed, as he was named in the Olyroos squad earlier this week to take on Iraq next week.

Thank God It's Friday... GW is now available at all good newsagents every Friday

Also available at Heart & Victory & Jets & Adelaide home games

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Jets ground Victory's finals hopes

Melbourne Victory 1

Newcastle Jets 3

Match Details

Newcastle Jets 1 (Tarek Elrich 39')
Adelaide United 0
At Hunter Stadium
Referee: Ben Williams
Crowd: 10,383

Newcastle Jets: 1.Ben Kennedy (Gk), 4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley, 5. Tiago, 6. Ben Kantarovski (2. Taylor Regan 51') 8. Jeremy Brockie, 10. Ruben Zadkovich, 11. Tarek Elrich (22. Ali Abbas 71') 13. Byun Sung-Hwan, 23. Ryan Griffiths, 24. Francis Jeffers (9. Michael Bridges 79') 25. Jacob Pepper

Yellow Cards: Zadkovich 58', Regan 85', Bridges 90+1
Red Cards: Nil

Adelaide United: 1. Eugene Galekovic (Gk), 2. Osama Malik, 3. Nigel Boogaard, 6. Cassio, 8. Evgeniy Levchenko, 9. Sergio Van Dijk, 10. Dario Vidosic (7. Zenon Caravella 73') 14. Cameron Watson, 17. Iain Ramsay, 18. Fabian Barbiero, 21 Francisco Usucar (15. Jacob Melling 15' [11. Bruce Djite 67])

Yellow Cards: Levchenko 13', Melling 56'
Red Cards: Nil

By Daniel Quinn

Newcastle Jets have all but ended Melbourne Victory's hopes of finals football this season with a 3-1 defeat at AAMI Park on Saturday night.

Jets took the lead through Ryan Griffiths before Harry Kewell equalised and Jacob Pepper scored a brace in a very entertaining first-half. It happened to be Newcastle's first win in Melbourne over Victory in over four years and Victory's first loss at home in 15 games.

Jim Magilton didn't make any changes to his Melbourne Victory side from the 1-1 draw with Gold Coast United whereas Gary van Egmond made one change to his Newcastle Jets side with Skipper Jobe Wheelhouse coming in for Jeremy Brockie who played 90 minutes midweek for New Zealand.

At a very wet AAMI Park Kewell registered the first chance when he shot from outside the box and the ball squeezed through 'keeper Ben Kennedy but just trickled wide.

Victory were on the attack seconds later with Hernandez and as Tiago missed the clearance Marco Rojas at the far post fired over.

On 20 minutes Newcastle opened the scoring with their opening chance. Ruben Zadkovich put in a great ball which Tarek Elrich nodded down for Griffiths who finished on the turn.

Three minutes later Ubay Luzardo was pushed by the goalscorer Griffiths inside the box. Jarred Gillett pointed to the spot and Kewell stepped up and equalised however Kennedy did get a touch.

But Victory couldn't hold onto the lead and on 29 minutes the onrushing Pepper scored his first A-League goal after Wheelhouse's low cross from the right.

Archie Thompson who was looking for his 100th A-League goal but was denied a penalty after the ball hit Ben Kantarovski's hand and chest.

Jets were looking for a third and got what they deserved when Zadkovich on the right continued to cause problems and sent another low cross for Pepper who finished with his left foot to score his second and second A-League goal.

Soon after the third Jets goal Matthew Kemp, who was probably was at fault for two of the goals, was dragged off for Leigh Broxham and stormed down the tunnel.

Thompson should have had that 100th goal but hit his effort against the woodwork.

On the edge of the break Victory were given a second penalty when Zadkovich, who was already booked, fouled Kewell inside the box. But Kewell fired his penalty well over.

Early into the second-half Elrich, in his new left-wing position, cut in from the left but fired straight into the hands of Ante Covic.

On 58 minutes Hernandez had a huge chance to grab one goal back but poked his effort right into the hands of Kennedy while one-on-one.

Second-half substitute Jean-Carlos Solorzano's header was next denied by Ben Kennedy after Hernandez's great ball.

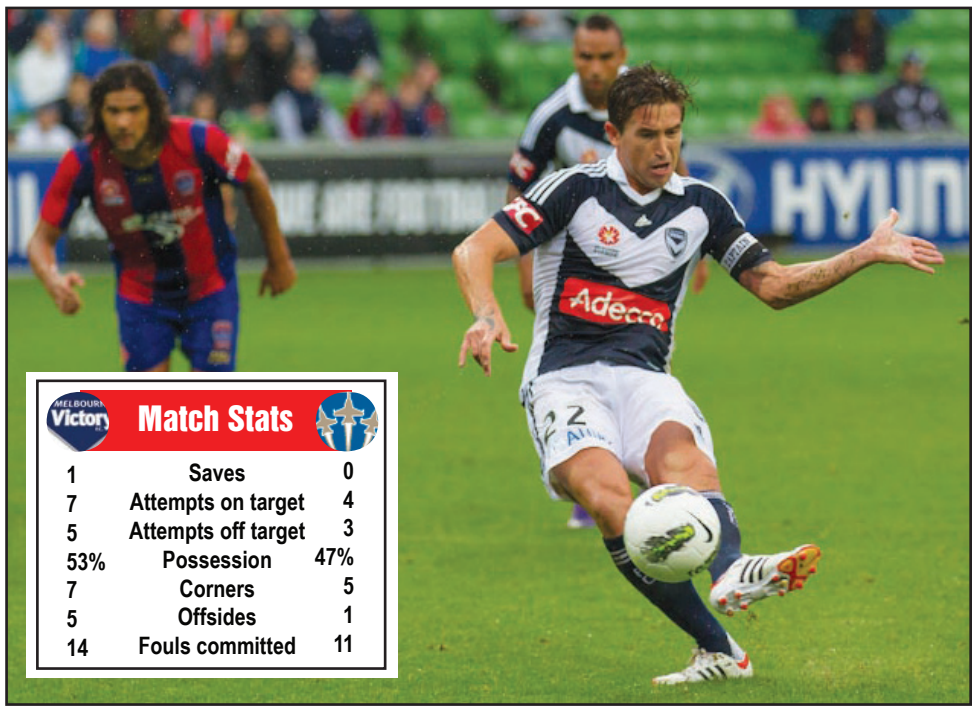
Solorzano from Leigh Broxham's corner headed over again before Kennedy saved Hernandez's effort.

But on 82 minutes Victory had a player sent off again for the eighth time this season with Hernandez given his second yellow card for a challenge on Sung-Hwan Byun.

Newcastle held on to their half-time lead and took all three points home. Despite the victory Newcastle remain sixth with Melbourne Heart ahead on goal difference.

It's high fives for scorer Jacob Pepper after converting a Francis Jefferies cross. Photo: DANIEL FLIS

Jets' Ryan Griffiths slips the ball past Ante Covic from an acute angle. Photo: TIM SIZE



Harry Kewell's second penalty of the match prepares for take-off. Photo: TIM SIZE

Match Stats

Victory		Jets
1	Saves	0
7	Attempts on target	4
5	Attempts off target	3
53%	Possession	47%
7	Corners	5
5	Offsides	1
14	Fouls committed	11

Adelaide United's season slips away

Adelaide United

0

Perth Glory

2

Match Details

Adelaide United FC 0
Perth Glory 2
(Mehmet 6', Burns 24')
Referee: Matt Gillett
Crowd: 5,898 @ Hindmarsh Stadium

Adelaide United line-up: 1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c), 2.Osama Malik (14.Cameron Watson 75'), 3.Nigel Boogaard, 5.Daniel Mullen, 6.Cassio (17.Iain Ramsay 60'), 7.Zenon Caravella, 8.Evgeniy Levchenko, 9.Sergio van Dijk, 10.Dario Vidosic, 11.Bruce Djite (18. Fabian Barbiero 73'), 12.Antony Golec

Substitutes not used: 20.Mark Birighitti (gk)
Yellow Cards: Galekovic 6', van Dijk 87'
Red Cards: Barbiero 87'

Perth Glory line-up: 1.Danny Vukovic (gk), 3.Bas van den Brink, 4.Billy Mehmet, 5.Steve Pantelidis, 7.Jacob Burns (c), 8.Adam Hughes, 13.Travis Dodd, 14.Steven McGarry (2.Josh Mitchell 81'), 19.Josh Risdon, 27.Andrezinho (17.Todd Howarth 70'), 35.Dean Heffernan

Substitutes not used: 15.Tommy Amphlett, 20.Neil Young (gk)
Yellow Cards: Dodd 32', Pantelidis 57'
Red Cards: Nil

By Nic Kerber

Another home game has ended in what has become a familiar old story for Adelaide United FC as the Reds' faint finals hopes were all but dashed in a 2-1 loss to Perth Glory at Hindmarsh.

Needing to win all four of their remaining games to have any chance of sneaking into the top six, the Reds again found themselves on the wrong side of the score line and the luck meter.

Perth striker Billy Mehmet opened the scoring in controversial circumstances in the 6th minute and then Jacob Burns doubled the Glory's advantage 18 minutes later.

Any chance of a Reds fight back were cut short when a Nigel Boogaard goal with 15 minutes to go was disallowed for an infringement on Perth goalkeeper Danny Vukovic, the decision, together with Fabian Barbiero's straight red card late in the game, summing up the Reds' night and probably their season.

Nothing seemed to go the home side's way in a game where they needed to have a touch of fortune on their side in order to rediscover some winning form at home and also build confidence ahead of their opening AFC Champions League match in Uzbekistan on Tuesday.

The contest was only six minutes old before Perth went ahead in what was one of the game's main talking points.

Bruce Djite was met head on by Dean Heffernan, the referee keeping the whistle in his pocket despite the Reds striker being felled, and Perth took full advantage.

The Glory moved the ball across to a free Travis Dodd on the right, the former Reds skipper putting an intent pass across the goal face and Mehmet was at the far post to put the ball into the back of the net.

If the Reds thought themselves unlucky not to have won a free kick with the incident involving Djite, it was compounded when replays hinted Mehmet was in an offside position when he tapped in Dodd's cross.

Behind at home again, the Reds tried valiantly to respond in a promising ten minute period but as has happened all too often this season, they could not capitalise and were subsequently stung at the other end through a sublime strike from Burns.

The Reds struggled to clear a corner and the ball fell invitingly for the Glory captain, who struck a shot off the outside of his right boot from just inside the area that curled away from a diving Galekovic.

United's midfield were finding it difficult to get any fluency going against a physical Glory outfit, Dodd clipping Vidosic from behind in the 32nd minute which saw his name go in the referee's book.

Adam Hughes missed a golden chance to extend Perth's lead in the 57th minute after some magic down the right from Dodd, before Sergio van Dijk, in his 100th appearance, could not hit the target with a right footed effort.

A nasty head clash between Osama Malik and Hughes then saw an extended break in play and it invigorated the Reds momentarily, but the closest they came was when Boogaard nodded a tame header into the waiting arms of Vukovic.

With 15 minutes to go, the Reds thought they had set up a tense finish when Vukovic failed to handle a Vidosic corner and Boogaard pounced to smash the ball into the back of the net, but the referee blew for a foul on the Glory keeper.

The Reds' frustration then boiled over in the 87th minute when Barbiero was shown a straight red card for allegedly making high contact with Heffernan after the two had clashed initially minutes earlier, van Dijk receiving a yellow for dissent.

United could not muster a goal despite seven minutes of injury time, the final whistle telling another tale of a game where the Reds played with intent but without the rub of the green, a scenario that sounds much like their season.

Coach John Kosmina admitted the first goal hurt his team and that it was just not going to be the Reds' night with the way the game and the officiating decisions unfolded.

"You've got to deal with those things I guess, take it on the jaw, but it probably sums our season up – when things go against you they really go against you, and I thought we had a legitimate goal disallowed as well," Kosmina said in his reflection of Mehmet's opener and Boogaard's strike.

"It's a tough one. I didn't know goalkeepers could earn free kicks for dropping the ball because that's all that happened – no one touched him."

"But it was a decision that went against us and it was just another one of the thousand cuts that we've been dying by lately."

Kosmina did however concede that the Reds did not create enough quality opportunities throughout the match, and with the finals out of reach, the focus now turns to the AFC Champions League.

"Now we can concentrate on it (the AFC Champions League). Everyone else has been talking about it, it's almost like they've death reddened us, so now we don't have to worry about the A-League and we can concentrate on the ACL," Kosmina said.

Match Stats

2	Saves	4
7	Attempts on target	4
6	Attempts off target	5
56%	Possession	44%
11	Corners	0
1	Offsides	1
17	Fouls committed	11

It didn't take long before Billy Mehmet got the show on the road for Perth Glory. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Perth's Jacob Burns salutes the crowd after a scoring a superb goal. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Adelaide United players remonstrate to referee Matt Gillett after Nigel Boogaard's goal was disallowed. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Heart denies Roar top spot in thriller

By Jarrod Ellis

Brisbane Roar 1
Melbourne Heart 1

Match Details

Brisbane Roar 1 (Mitch Nichols 32')
Melbourne Heart 1 (Curtis Good 49')
Friday, 2 March 2012
Venue: Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane
Referee: Ryan Shepheard
Crowd: 10,988

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theoklitos (Gk), 2. Matt Smith (C), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 6. Erik Paartalu, 7. Besart Berisha, 8. Massimo Murdocca, 16. Mohamed Adnan, 17. Mitch Nichols (21. James Meyer 38'), 22. Thomas Broich, 24. Nick Fitzgerald (11. Issey Nakajima-Farran 64')

Substitutes Not Used: 4. Matthew Jurman, 20. Andrew RedmaYne (Gk)

Yellow Cards: James Meyer 72'
Red Cards: Nil

Melbourne Heart: 1. Clint Bolton (Gk), 2. Michael Marrone, 4. Simon Colosimo, 5. Fred (C) (7. Rutger Worm 61'), 6. Matthew Thompson, 10. Wayne Srhoj, 13. Jonatan Germano, 16. Aziz Behich, 18. Curtis Good, 19. Eli Babalj, 23. Mate Dugandzic (11. Alex Terra 85')

Substitutes Not Used: 3. Brendan Hamill, 30. Sebastian Mattei (Gk)

Yellow Cards: Michael Marrone 33', Eli Babalj 53', Matthew Thompson 71', Simon Colosimo 88', Wayne Srhoj 90+4'

Red Cards: Nil

Brisbane's hopes of retaining the Premier's Plate were dealt a blow on Friday night as they were held 1-1 at home by Melbourne Heart.

Despite taking the lead through a Mitch Nichols strike in the first half Brisbane were unable to find their rhythm and the visitors made them pay for a lacklustre defensive effort.

Heart deserved their point after equalising from a corner though they almost found themselves with nothing to show for their efforts after conceding a penalty in injury time.

Brisbane started the brighter of the two sides, bursting out of the blocks with confidence showing in their early passages of play.

Two minutes in, Massimo Murdocca was first to test Bolton with a powerful shot that flew off his left boot and Besart Berisha could do little more than guide the rebound into the goalkeeper's body.

Heart were happy to play direct football on the counter attack would have had an early lead if not for a heavy first touch from Eli Babalj.

The home side were combining their trademark passing style with the occasional long range effort and it was from the latter in which they took the lead in the 32nd minute.

A strike from Thomas Broich, back in the starting eleven following a one game injury absence, was deflected away with Mitch Nichols showing impressive technique to unleash a low, driving shot into the bottom corner of the net.

However, the 22-year-old's involvement was short-lived as he was replaced six minutes later due to a minor groin strain.

Brisbane could have had a second before the interval, Ivan Franjic crossed low for Besart Berisha, the Albanian forward turned Simon Colosimo but Clint Bolton was awake to the danger and rushed forward to save the shot.

Melbourne Heart started the second half brightly, Fred releasing Mate Dugandzic down the right wing who crossed for Babalj and his close range shot was saved superbly by Michael Theooklitos.

The Brisbane keeper was called into action once again from the resultant corner, turning a header onto the post with another first class save.

Heart didn't let up however and from the next corner they finally found the back of the net, Curtis Good capitalised on some pedestrian defending and unleashed a powerful header that Theoklitos had no chance of saving.

The visitors dictated play for the opening fifteen minutes, penning Brisbane into their half in search of another goal.

Melbourne suffered a blow when Fred left the pitch for Rutger Worm in the 63rd minute, the Brazilian had been giving Brisbane plenty of trouble in the middle of the park and the Roar were likely pleased to see him exit.

Worm could have earned himself a goal in the 66th minute if he'd only timed his run into the box a little better to meet a Dugandzic cross.

Both teams continued to huff and puff but neither was truly coming close to scoring. Signs of fatigue were becoming evident and it was the visitors who continued to look the stronger, a strange sight at Suncorp Stadium where so often Brisbane has run over their opponents in the final stages of matches.

Brisbane's had penalty cries turned down by match referee just before niney minutes was up. James Meyer was brought down in the box but replays showed that Simon Colosimo got the barest of touches on the ball first.

Issey Nakajima-Farran then had a shot saved by Bolton in stoppage time but Brisbane weren't done yet.

Only moments later Brisbane did indeed get their penalty. This time Colosimo brought down Berisha as he attempted to clear a ball into the area and match referee Ryan Shepheard pointed to the spot.

Surprisingly it was defender Mohammed Adnan that stepped up to the spot and much to the home crowd's horror Clint Bolton denied the Bahraini with an impressive save.

Post-match, Roar coach Ange Postecoglou was philosophical about the result but refused to blame the Bahraini defender, or any of his players, for failing to take all three points.

"There have been some pretty good 90 plus minute moments here over the last couple of years but the footballing gods just weren't with us tonight," he said.

"But that's football and that's just part of life and it would have been nice but it was not meant to be.

"Mohamed has taken a number of penalties for his country and is a very accomplished penalty taker.

"That's the nature of penalties and I will never be critical of anyone who takes a penalty because the easiest thing to do when it is given is turn your back and walk to the half way line.

"It was a good save by Clint but it takes a lot of courage to get up there and I was very comfortable with him taking it."

Roar keeper Michael Theoklitos pulls off a fingertip save to keep Heart at bay. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Match Stats

3	Saves	7
10	Attempts on target	5
4	Attempts off target	5
53%	Possession	47%
5	Corners	7
3	Offsides	3
13	Fouls committed	11

Besart Berisha embraces Mitch Nichols, after the Olyroo broke the deadlock. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Feeling Good! Heart players are ecstatic after Curtis Good come through with the goods for Heart. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Mariners dent Sydney's final hopes

CC Mariners 1

Sydney FC 1

Match Details

Central Coast 1 (Troy Hearfield 93)
Sydney FC 1 (Joel Chianese 56)
Bluetongue Stadium
Crowd: 8,658
Referee: Chris Beath

Sydney FC: 20. Ivan Necevski, 4. Pascal Bosschaart, 5. Michael Beauchamp, 7. Brett Emerton (11. Dimi Petratos '59), 8. Karol Kisel (17. Terry Antonis '78), 9. Bruno Cazarine (22. Nathan Sherlock '91), 10 Nick Carle, 15. Terry McFlynn (c), 16. Joel Chianese, 21. Scott Jamieson, 23. Rhyan Grant.
Sub not used: 1. Liam Reddy (gk).
Yellow cards: Rhyan Grant 23, Karol Kisel 30, Nick Carle 45.
Red cards: Nil

Central Coast: 1. Mathew Ryan, 3. Joshua Rose, 6. Patrick Zwaanswijk, 7. John Hutchinson, 11. Oliver Bozanic (2. Daniel McBreen '76), 14. Michael Mcglinchey, 16. Trent Sainsbury (12. Troy Hearfield '66), 17. Tomas Rogic, 18. Alex Wilkinson (c), 19. John Sutton. 23. Adam Kwasnik (9. Bernie Ibini '55).

Sub not used: 20. Justin Pasfield (gk).
Yellow cards: Joshua Rose 83, John Hutchinson 93.
Red cards: Nil

By Adrian Deans

As I said in my preview, the Mariners are no longer concentrating on the road ahead. They are watching nervously in the rear view mirror as Brisbane tailgate them like a bunch of rabid hoons.

Melbourne Heart did the Mariners a massive favour by taking two points off Brisbane, but could they take advantage against a misfiring Sydney FC?
They could not.

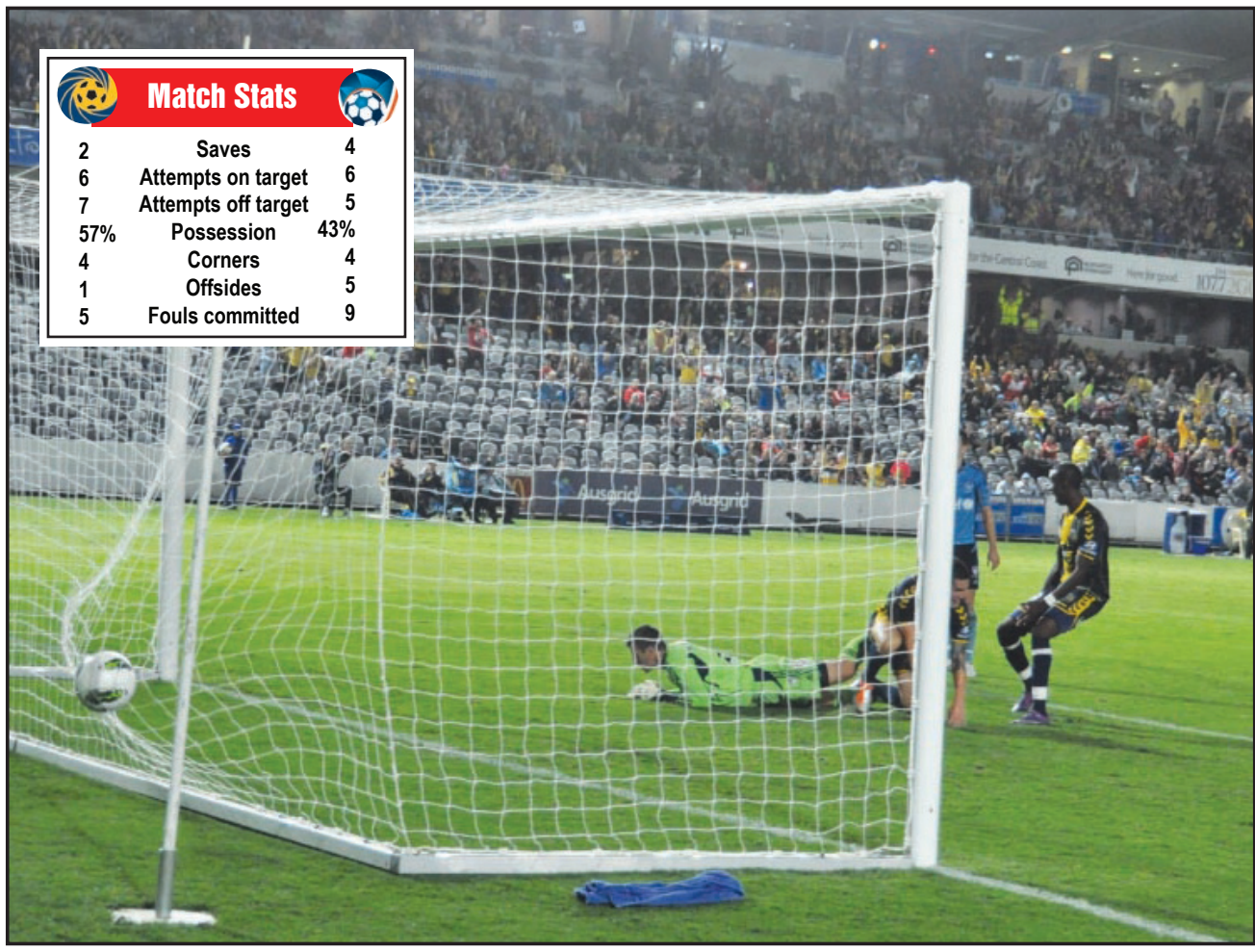
The Mariners dropped a bombshell during the week with the news that Rostyn Griffiths had been sold to China. This was a major blow – Griffiths is one of those slightly invisible players who are rarely noticed when the experts are handing out man-of-the-match awards, but are worth their weight in gold to their team mates. Griffiths constantly sweeps the front of his defence, wins the ball and immediately gives it to the creative players – Mustafa Amini was noticeably less effective when Griffiths was suspended a couple of months ago – and Patrick Zwaanswijk has also lost his partner in crime.

The Mariners were also missing Pedj Bojic (who has been fabulous down the right this season), Mustafa Amini (a few cream buns heavy after his gourmet Olyroos sojourn), and Bernie Ibini started on the bench.

Patrick Zwaanswijk has been crucial to the Mariners' attacking shape this season with his first time balls into the midfield and magnificent cross field balls that have set up numerous fruitful forays, but in the first half of this game, Sydney had a plan to close him down. Not only did he constantly have Joel Chianese in his face, he was deprived of the services of Rostyn Griffiths who automatically provides an option whenever Zwaanswijk wins the ball.

Similarly, Jamieson and Grant pressed hard on Rose and Sainsbury, denying the Mariners their usual attacking channels. These tactical moves made for a slow start on a boggy pitch (after days of torrential rain) and it took some time for either side to fashion a chance, but on 21 minutes Nicky Carle combined with Bruno Cazarine to charge into the box but was superbly denied by Mat Ryan who was off his line in a flash.

Almost immediately afterwards, the Mariners could have gone ahead when Tomas Rogic's curling left-footer brought the best out of Ivan Necevski. Kwasnik had a chance from the resulting corner and then soon after McGlinchey fired over when he should have tested the keeper.



Match Stats

2	Saves	4
6	Attempts on target	6
7	Attempts off target	5
57%	Possession	43%
4	Corners	4
1	Offsides	5
5	Fouls committed	9

Troy Hearfield pops up at the death to head home and salvage a point for the Mariners. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

It was a cautious first half with chances few and far between, but the second course provided spicier fare. Almost immediately, Nicky Carle's backheel set up Jamieson, whose shot looped over Ryan but hit the crossbar and the chances flowed fairly regularly from then. Nicky Carle was brilliant for Sydney and Rogic, McGlinchey and Rose kept the Mariners fans interested.

Chianese fired a warning shot straight at Ryan in the 53rd minute, then shortly after broke the deadlock after Ryan smothered his shot, then Sainsbury did brilliantly to block Carle's follow-up shot, which then fell to Chianese on the ground who scrambled up to finish. In fact, Chianese looked offside, until we realised Zwaanswijk (of all people) dawdling out on the left wing had possibly kept him on.

It was the goal the game had needed. The Mariners finally came alive and spent much of the rest of the game creating chances. Bernie Ibini's first touch of the game could (and should) have been a goal when Zwaanswijk's precise long ball picked him out on the edge of the box. His first touch was perfect, his second touch less so after Necevski did well to force him wide.

Then a couple of minutes later, Ibini made himself another chance, cutting in from the right and smashing a thunderous shot just left of the goal. Rogic was still creating and set up Ollie Bozanic in the 63rd minute, but Ollie couldn't decide whether to shoot or pass so consequently did neither.

Further chances fell to both sides but deep into injury time the Sydney defence was strangely insouciant as the ball bounced about in the box, allowing Troy Hearfield to duck in on the far post and nod the ball past Necevski. The Sydney fans were devastated at their team's inability to hang onto a lead, but truly a draw was the right result.

It was a shame for the Sydney fans (who always travel in big numbers to Bluetongue) but Arlo (from Cremorne) was fairly dismissive of his team's performance: "Both teams needed the win but neither started to play until the second half. Two mediocre teams, and neither deserved the three points."

I understand Arlo works in public relations for Clive Palmer.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets – published by Vulgar Press, distributed by Dennis Jones and Associates and available in all good book stores. ebook also available at www.mrcleansheets.com

Patrick Zwaanswijk smashes his effort against the SFC crossbar.
Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Tight marking is the order of the day as SFC's Dimitri Petratos gets close to Mariner Bernie Ibini. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

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(ebook also available).

Finals spot beckons for Phoenix

Wellington Phoenix

2

Gold Coast United

0

Match Details

Wellington Phoenix 2
(Durante 29, Ward 90)
Gold Coast United 0
At Westpac Stadium

Phoenix: 1.M.Paston, 2.M.Muscat, 6.T.Brown, 7.L.Bertos, 8.P.Ifill, 9.C.Greenacre, 17.V.Lia, 18.B.Sigmund, 21.D.Sanchez (14.M.Pavlovic 66'), 22.A.Durante, 24.A.Smith (12.N.Ward 70').

Yellow cards: Smith
Red cards: None

Gold Coast: 20.J.Tyson, 2.J.Brillante (22.P.Jungschlager 69'), 3.M.Thwaite, 4.Z.Anderson, 7.G.Mebrahtu (31.D.Bragg 72'), 15. A.Traore, 16.M.Ritgers, 17.C.Harold, 26.D.McGowan, 28.D.Bowles, 33.M.Cooper (11.J.Barker-Daish 65').

Yellow cards: None
Red cards: None

By Joe Gallagher

Wellington Phoenix recorded their second win in a row and returned to third spot on the A-League ladder on Sunday with a 2-0 win over cellar-dwellers Gold Coast United.

The result flatters a youthful Gold Coast side who had to put a tumultuous week behind them and make the trip across the Tasman with their long-term future in serious doubt.

Wellington coach Ricki Herbert opted to play Vince Lia at left back in place of an ill Tony Lochhead, and American Alex Smith filled the hole in midfield left by Lia.

Missing for the Gold Coast were ex-Phoenix Kristian Rees and Ben Halloran, replaced by Chris Harold and Dylan McGowan. However it was not the on-field disruption that has made headlines for the Gold Coast this week, but the decision by the FFA to strip controversial owner Clive Palmer of his license, calling both this game and United's existence into doubt.

They were given a warm welcome by the Yellow Fever – who would have expected the three points – and were quickly put into their work against a Phoenix side looking to build on last week's win in Sydney.

Barbadan Paul Ifill missed a straightforward chance in the fourth minute after a great ball into the box from Dani Sanchez, and the flood of squandered Phoenix chances began.

Tim Brown's fierce strike from the edge of the area was beaten away well by goalkeeper Jerrad Tyson and moments later the stopper was called into action again to brilliantly thwart Phoenix captain Andrew Durante.

But it was Durante who was on hand to tuck home a Leo Bertos corner and give the Phoenix a lead they had thoroughly earned with enterprising attacking play throughout the first half. The winger's ball from the right was flicked on in the box and the skipper finished just his second A-League goal for the Phoenix after half an hour.

What followed was a remarkable flurry of Phoenix chances – even more remarkable was that none of them were turned home.

Brown found the side netting with Chris Greenacre in space across the face of goal, Ifill fired a weak left footed shot straight at Tyson and Leo Bertos squandered the easiest opportunity of the match by opting to shoot straight at the goalkeeper when a simple pass would have given Ifill the easiest goal he will score this season. From the following corner, Sigmund's header was saved, when Tyson appeared to know very little about the strike.

But while United were fortunate to head into the sheds only a goal down, Golgol Mehbratu – their best on the day – was unlucky not to have scored as his innocuous shot from distance beat Paston and was stopped by the upright.

The second half carried on in similar fashion to the first with Wellington pressing, but failing to find the killer blow. Brown's third golden opportunity of the match sailed wide after a glancing header was mishit from a brilliant Bertos cross.

Durante, too, was unlucky not to have grabbed a brace when his header was turned over the bar by Tyson.

But in the final minute of stoppage time, Nick Ward eventually turned in a move which had at least four shots blocked or saved by a desperate United backline.

A deflated Gold Coast now have to look forward to a trip to Newcastle to face the Jets on Friday, but can hold their heads high after a spirited defensive performance in a very challenging week.

And for the Phoenix it's back on the road with a two-match Melbourne road trip to come in what might be the most telling fortnight in their season. They've won two in a row and Herbert will be very encouraged by the performance of Smith in midfield, before he was substituted with what appeared to be a niggle.

The main concern, though, for the Phoenix boss will be his side's impotence in front of goal. They saved it until very late to secure the three points and against another side might have been punished for their poor finishing.

But it's three points to the tally which lifts them above Perth into third spot on the ladder, now only three points back from champions Brisbane Roar.

On the other hand, the best United can hope for now is to avoid the wooden spoon with a strong finish to the campaign.

Match Stats

2	Saves	5
14	Attempts on target	3
7	Attempts off target	5
47%	Possession	53%
15	Corners	4
3	Offsides	1
12	Fouls committed	7

The Phoenix continue to fly and have Andrew Durante to thank on this occassion. Photo: DANIEL PANTER

Phoenix's Leo Bertos shields the ball from Daniel Bowles.
Photo: DANIEL PANTER

Phoenix striker Pau Ilfill torments the Gold Coast defence.
Photo: DANIEL PANTER

PICS OF ROUND 24

Heart's Clint Bolton and Roar's Besart Berisha show there's no hard feelings after the final whistle. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Adeliade United fans give the thumbs up prior to the Perth Glory clash. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Les Shorrock's Action Packed Picture Page

Heart keeper Clint Bolton is unable to stop Mitch Nichols' strike, to put the Roar ahead 1-0. Photo: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Melboune Victory fans celebrate after Hary Kewell scored from the spot against the Jets. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Wellington Phoenix fans get a bout of yellow fever during an autograph session with their heroes. Photo: DANIEL PANTER

A lone balloon floats away at AAMI Park, as does Melbourne Victory's finals hopes. Photo: TIM SIZE

Harry Kewell can't believe his luck after his penalty attempt cleared the crossbar. Photo: TIM SIZE

Newcastle Jets v Gold Coast United

Fri 9 Mar Ausgrid Stadium 8:00pm

Jets Line Up

1. Ben Kennedy (gk)
2. Taylor Regan
4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley
5. Tiago Calvano
6. Ben Kantarovski
8. Jeremy Brockie
9. Michael Bridges
11. Tarek Elrich
12. Jobe Wheelhouse
13. Sung-Hwan Byun
14. Labinot Haliti
19. Matthew Nash (gk)
22. Ali Abbas
23. Ryan Griffiths
24. Francis Jeffers
25. Jacob Pepper
26. Connor Chapman

Coach: Gary van Egmond

In: Nil

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Ruben Zadkovich (suspended – 1 game)

By Shaun Dyas

The Newcastle Jets face Gold Coast United this Friday night at Hunter Stadium with a berth in the A-league finals series tantalisingly close.

Newcastle's win away against the Melbourne Victory last week, coupled with Sydney FC being unable to defeat the Central Coast Mariners means the Jets have opened up a three point cushion over Viteslav Lavicka's side.

Newcastle now has the perfect opportunity to ram home the advantage against a Gold Coast side that must surely be distracted by the events of the past few weeks.

It took some last minute negotiating between the FFA and the Gold Coast players just to enable their match against Wellington Phoenix to proceed last week. It seemed to affect the performance of the players who in all honesty were lucky to only lose 2-0.

At times of uncertainty like these you need your senior players to lead the way and the fact that Kristian Rees has accepted a role with Palmer's new Football Australia organisation exacerbates this.

Rees has been solid all season in organising the Gold Coast rearguard to allow their exciting youngsters the space and freedom to terrorise opposition defences. Gold Coast looked vulnerable last week in defence and the absence of the big defender had a lot to do with it.

Head-to-Head: All matches (played 9): Newcastle Jets wins 4, Gold Coast United wins 4 (1 draw)

Odds:
Jets 1.49
Draw 4.35
GCUFC 10.0

Players like Ben Halloran, Gol Gol Mebrahtu and Chris Harold are all still capable, but the Jets have been fantastic in recent weeks on the counter attack.

You only have to look at the two goals scored by Newcastle midfielder Jacob Pepper last week as examples.

Pepper has been rewarded for his recent performances with a call-up to the Olyroos squad to face Iraq later this month which is sure to only add to his confidence.

One downside for the Jets is that Ruben Zadkovich will miss this match due to accruing his eighth yellow card of the season which could be one area that the visitors may be able to exploit.

Since he has been shifted to right back, the Novocastrians have been a much improved side with his willingness to gallop forward to support the attack.

It has also enabled Tarek Elrich the freedom of being pushed further up the park and he is playing his best football since the Jets won the championship four years ago.

Jets coach Gary Van Egmond has the choice of pushing Elrich back into defence or utilising the reliable Taylor Regan.

Gold Coast coach Mike Mulvey may look at this as an area that his side may be able to exploit and he could use the pace at his disposal to unsettle the Jets in this area.

Newcastle should be confident and expecting to win this match. They simply have too much to play for and should be able to deal with a Gold Coast side that have much bigger things on their minds than football. I expect the Jets to win and win quite comfortably.

Kiss of Death
Jets 3-1 Gold Coast

Gold Coast Line Up

20.Jerrad Tyson (gk)
2.Josh Brillante
3.Michael Thwaite (c)
4.Zac Anderson
10.Tahj Minniecon
11.Jake Barker-Daish
15.Adama Traore
16.Maceo Rigters
17.Chris Harold
21.Daniel Severino
22.Peter Jungschlager
23.Dylan McGowan
28.Daniel Bowles
31.Daniel Bragg
40.Chris O'Connor (gk)
Coach: Mike Mulvey

In: 10.Tahj Minniecon (returns from foot injury), 21.Daniel Severino (promoted)

Out: 33.Mitch Cooper (failed fitness test), 7.Golgol Mebrahtu (failed fitness test)

Unavailable: 1.Glen Moss (groin injury – 2 weeks), 9.Joel Porter (calf – 2 weeks), 12.Dylan Macallister (hamstring – 1 week), 19.Chris Broadfoot (ankle injury – indefinite), 13.Ante Rozic (hamstring injury – 1 week), 5.Kristian Rees (not contracted), 14.Ben Halloran (injured – 1 week), 18.James Brown (ankle injury – 1 week)

Melb Heart v Wellington Phoenix

Sat 10 Mar AAMI Park 5:30pm

Heart Line Up

1. Clint Bolton (GK)
2.Michael Marrone
3.Brendan Hamill
4.Simon Colosimo
5.Fred ©
6.Matt Thompson
7.Rutger Worm
10.Wayne Srhoj
11.Alex Terra
13.Jonatan Germano
15.David Williams
16.Aziz Behich
17.Jason Hoffman
18.Curtis Good
19.Eli Babalj
23.Mate Dugandzic
27.Craig Goodwin
30.Sebastian Mattei (GK)
Coach: John van 't Schip

In: Jason Hoffman, David Williams, Craig Goodwin (all promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Kristian Sarkies (1-2 weeks – quad)

By Joe Gallagher

Playoff positions are on the line as Wellington Phoenix kick off their two-match Melbourne road-trip against the Heart at AAMI Park on Saturday evening.

A win for the hosts would temporarily place them fourth with Perth before the Glory's game against the Mariners, while a loss would leave the door open for the Jets and Sydney FC to sneak into the top six in their place.

The visitors land in Victoria looking for a third straight win which would mathematically assure them a spot in the playoffs, bring up their greatest season points tally, and pull them level with champions Brisbane Roar.

The ingredients are there, then, for an intense match, and perhaps a dress rehearsal should the two sides make the post-season.

Phoenix coach Ricki Herbert will still be without his leading assist-maker Daniel, but should reclaim Tony Lochhead from sickness. He will face a tough choice in the middle of the park with American Alex Smith putting in an excellent performance in the 2-0 win over the Gold Coast, putting pressure on Vince Lia – Lochhead's replacement on Sunday – and Tim Brown for a starting berth.

Head-to-Head: All matches (played 5): Melbourne Heart wins 2, Wellington Phoenix wins 2 (1 draw)

Odds:
Heart 2.30
Draw 3.40
Phoenix 3.14

Leading scorer Paul Ifill will be very keen to continue his good form against the Heart – in the last fixture between these two sides he scored a double and was a constant threat.

But on the other bench John van't Schip has inspirational goalkeeper Clint Bolton to thank for keeping alive his side's three match unbeaten run. The stopper, a standout for Melbourne this season, saved a stoppage time penalty in the Heart's 1-1 draw in Brisbane last weekend.

He will have ex-Phoenix fan favourite Fred in his lineup, and, teamed with Eli Babalj and Aziz Behich, the hosts will pose a serious attacking threat to one of the most frugal defences in the league.

The game will likely be won by the odd goal, and this is a fixture which has traditionally been dominated by the home side. Wellington, then, will have to be at their very best to pick up their first win in Melbourne in their five year existence.

That said, Wellington's incompetence away from home has recently left them, with four wins from their last five trips across the Tasman, and they are looking to establish a winning run before the finals series kicks off in April.

Melbourne Heart are desperate for a win to move away from a mid-table logjam and three points on Saturday would go a long way to re-establishing the title credentials they showed towards the back end of 2011.

Kiss of Death
Heart 1-1 Phoenix

Phoenix Line Up

: 1. Mark Paston (GK)
2. Manny Muscat
3. Tony Lochhead
4. Brent Griffiths
6. Tim Brown
7. Leo Bertos
8. Paul Ifill
9. Chris Greenacre
12. Nicky Ward
13. Niko Tsattalios
14. Mirjan Pavlovic
15. Cameron Lindsay
17. Vince Lia
18. Ben Sigmund
20, Tony Warner (GK)
21. Dani Sanchez
22. Andrew Durante (C)
24. Alex Smith
Coach: Ricki Herbert
three to be omitted

In: Brent Griffiths (promoted)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Daniel (ankle injury - 4/ 6 weeks), Lucas Pantelis (knee injury - indefinite), Jimmy Downey (injured – 2/3 weeks)

Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory

Sat 10 Mar Sydney Football Stdm 7:45pm

Sydney FC Line Up

1. Liam Reddy
2. Sebastian Ryall
4. Pascal Bosschaart
5. Michael Beauchamp
7. Brett Emerton
8. Karol Kisel
9. Bruno Cazarine
10. Nick Carle
11. Dimi Petratos
12. Shannon Cole
15. Terry McFlynn (c)
16. Joel Chianese
17. Terry Antonis
19. Mark Bridge
20. Ivan Necevski
21. Scott Jamieson
22. Nathan Sherlock
23. Rhyan Grant
24. Mitch Mallia

Coach: Vitezslav Lavicka
four to be omitted

In: 19.Mark Bridge (returns from injury), 2.Sebastian Ryall (Returns from injury), 12.Shannon Cole (promoted), 24.Mitch Mallia (promoted).

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Nil

By FFA

Harry Kewell's visit to his hometown should ensure Allianz Stadium has a bumper crowd when Sydney FC host Melbourne Victory this weekend.

But, despite the immediate effect, it's arguable that no one is completely satisfied with the Qantas Socceroo's return to the Harbour City.

In an ideal Sky Blue world, Kewell would probably be lining up for the home team; in a Victory fan's dreams, he would be leading the Big Vs to yet another Hyundai A-League finals series. Football has always been the dreamer's game.

In fact, both Kewell's and Brett Emerton's return to domestic Australian football has hardly gone to plan. Neither have quite hit the heights many hoped at the start of the season.

The dual announcements that brought two of the biggest names in the game into the A-League last year seemed to suggest this season would again see Victory and Sydney go head-to-head for the headlines and the silverware.

There's no doubt both Kewell and Emerton created plenty of media interest at the beginning of the season, but all that positivity has been lost in a mire of high expectations, mediocre performances and off-field drama.

The somewhat fanciful thought that two Socceroos could have an immediate impact had to be revised when fans and pundits realised the problems that had to be dealt with at both of the competition's two biggest clubs.

Sky Blues aim to keep finals hopes alive

Kewell seemed tailor-made for Melbourne Victory; the biggest name for the most successful club, a creative force to slot in behind Mehmet Durakovic's enviable attacking stocks. But the club's decision to promote from within proved a mistake, and the squad that had once dominated the league suddenly seemed in need of serious rebuilding work.

Meanwhile, Sydney FC were rejoicing at their own coup, bringing Emerton straight from the English Premier League to drive their own revitalisation. But again, the squad that surrounded the marquee man left a lot to be desired and coach Viteslav Lavicka's once-successful tactics were left looking one-dimensional in the face of Brisbane Roar and Central Coast's resurgence.

So while there's no doubt Kewell's return to Sydney will boost the Sky Blues crowd, with officials hoping for 20,000-plus, no one's going to the game expecting to be wowed. Rather, it is a resumption of the Big Blue rivalry with the chance to see a couple of Socceroos in action.

So close to the end of the season, the fixture looms as both sides last and only chance to scrape into the finals, with both still relying on other results. A win for either means the faint hope of finals football stays alive, with the added bonus to kill off the dreams of their biggest rival.

Whatever the result, Harry Kewell's return to Sydney isn't quite the season-defining fixture many hoped it would be.

Kiss of Death
SFC 2-2 Victory

Victory Line Up

1. Tando Velaphi (gk)
2. Matthew Foschini
3. Fabio
4. Petar Franjic
5.Mark Milligan
6. Leigh Broxham
9. Jean Carlos Solorzano
10. Archie Thompson
11. Marco Rojas
13. Diogo Ferreira
14. Billy Celeski
17.Jimmy Jeggo
18. Danny Allsopp
19. Isaka Cernak
21. Ante Covic (GK)
22. Harry Kewell
24. Ubay Luzardo

two to be omitted
Coach: Jim Magilton

In: 14. Billy Celeski (returns from injury), 13. Diogo Ferreira (promoted), 7. Fabio (returns from injury), 18. Danny Allsopp (returns from injury)
Out: 7. Matthew Kemp (suspended), 16.Carlos Hernandez (suspended)

Unavailable: 8. Grant Brebner (injured), Adrian Leijer (injured)

Brisbane Roar v Adelaide United

Sun 11 Mar Suncorp Stadium 5:00pm

Roar Line Up

1. Michael Theoklitos (GK)
2. Matt Smith (C)
3. Shane Stefanutto
4. Matt Jurman
5. Ivan Franjic
6. Erik Paaratlu
7. Besart Berisha
11. Issey Nakajima-Farran
14. Rocky Visconte
16. Mohamed Adnan
18. Luke Brattan
19. Jack Hingert
20. Andrew Redmayne (GK)
21. James Meyer
22. Thomas Broich
24. Nick Fitzgerald

Coach: Ange Postecoglou
one to be omitted

In: 14. Rocky Visconte (promoted), 18. Luke Brattan (promoted), 19. Jack Hingert (promoted)

Out: Mitch Nichols (groin - 1 week), Massimo Murdocca (shoulder - 1 week)

Unavailable: 10. Henrique (Suspended - one week)

By Jarrod Ellis

With their midweek Asian foray behind them Brisbane returns to the A-League and their pursuit of the Premier's Plate when they host Adelaide United on Sunday.

With only three games of the regular season remaining Brisbane will likely need to win all their remaining games if they're to unseat competition frontrunners Central Coast Mariners.

With the Mariners playing the later game on Sunday the Roar will have an opportunity to take top spot and place pressure on their rivals if they can take the three points against United.

The Reds will likely be up for the game though with master motivator John Kosmina in their ears and the memories of a 7-1 defeat to Brisbane earlier in the season still relatively fresh in their minds.

Brisbane will have to play the match without the services of key winger Henrique but are likely to see the return of Mitch Nichols from a groin complaint that ruled him out of the midweek clash with FC Tokyo.

The Roar was held at home last week by the Heart despite having the measure of their opponents and they'll need to avoid a repeat of those circumstances.

Besart Berisha is undoubtedly the Roar's largest goal threat and if he finds the net three more times before the end of the season he'll set a new record for goals in an A-League season.

Roar to maintain Premier's Plate pursuit

After the Heart and FC Tokyo results Brisbane will be desperate to score and should start very quickly out of the blocks. If Adelaide can hold on through the early stages without conceding the pressure may tell on the home side and if United can display the same form they showed midweek then this game could go either way.

Adelaide also enter the match on the back of an Asian Champions League match, the Reds having a much better time of things as they down four time Uzbek league champions Bunyodkor 2-1 away.

The win was highlighted by an exceptional defensive performance to accompany two excellent counter attacking goals, features that could prove extremely useful in the match against Brisbane.

With Adelaide's finals hopes all but over their trip to Brisbane will be relatively pressure free. The only worry hanging over Adelaide heads should be ensuring that they avoid a repeat of the embarrassing collapse that occurred at Suncorp Stadium at the beginning of the season.

Concerns over the possible state of the pitch have been raised with Sunday's game scheduled to be the sixth match at Suncorp in the last ten days. That figure coupled with consistent rain over the same period could make for a choppy surface that would disrupt Brisbane's passing game and perhaps serve a counter attacking Adelaide.

Kiss of Death
Roar 2-1 Adelaide

Adelaide Utd Line Up

1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c)
2.Osama Malik
3.Nigel Boogaard
4.Jon McKain
5.Daniel Mullen
6.Cassio
7.Zenon Caravella
8.Evgeniy Levchenko
9.Sergio van Dijk
10.Dario Vidosic
11.Bruce Djite
12.Antony Golec
14.Cameron Watson
15.Jacob Melling
17.Iain Ramsay
20.Mark Birighitti (gk)
one to be omitted

In: 21.Francisco Usucar (returns from hamstring injury), 4.Jon McKain (returns from knee injury)

Out: 18.Fabian Barbiero (suspended – 4 matches)

Unavailable: Spase Dilevski (groin), Paul Izzo (gk) (knee)

Perth Glory v CC Mariners

Sun 11 Mar nib Stadium 7:30pm

Glory Line Up

1.Danny Vukovic (Gk)
2.Josh Mitchell
3.Bas Van Den Brink
4.Billy Mehmet
5.Steve Pantelidis
7.Jacob Burns (C)
9.Shane Smeltz
10.Liam Miller
13.Travis Dodd
14.Steven Mcgarry
15.Tommy Amphlett
17.Todd Howarth
18. Jesse Makarounas
19. Josh Risdon
20. Neil Young
22.Adam Taggart
27.Andrezinho
35. Dean Heffernan
Coach: Ian Ferguson
Three To Be Omitted

In: 9.Shane Smeltz (Returns from Injury), 10.Liam Miller (Returns from Injury), 18. Jesse Makarounas (Promoted), 22.Adam Taggart (Promoted)
Out: 8.Adam Hughes (Released)

Unavailable: 6.Chris Coyne (Achilles), 11.Victor Sikora (Hip – Long Term Injury List), 16.Evan Berger (Hamstring)

By John Clark

The Perth Glory host the Central Coast Mariners at NIB Stadium this weekend, with both sides desperate for three point to secure their positions on the table.

The Mariners must be able to feel the Roar breathing down their necks in the pursuit of the premiership plate, and what seemed to be an unassailable lead is now just three points.

The boys from Gosford have truly struggled over the last month, winning just one in their last six. Add to this the fact that they will be travelling back from China, after playing a gruelling Champions League match against Tianjin Teda and the scene it set for the Glory to pick up the three points and keep their top 2 hopes alive. Currently Ian Ferguson's men sit fourth, a game clear of Heart in fifth and only 5 points shy of Brisbane in second. Perth has taken 22 points from their last 10 outings, after pressure was heaped on Ian Ferguson after a disappointing start to the campaign. Last weekend the Glory escaped Hindmarsh Stadium with all three points for the second time in a month. The ground is becoming a home away from home for the Glory and this time two goals to Jacob Burns and Billy Mehmet inside the first half hour meant another happy return to Perth. The Mariners performed a bit of a Houdini mission to score in the dying moments of injury time after it looked that Sydney would take all three points. They conceded around the hour mark when Joel Chianese neatly finished some good work by Carle, and despite dominating play and having John Hutchinson rattle the bar they looked like adding another home loss to their poor run of form. That was before Troy Hearfield popped up to nod home and condemn Sydney to a share of the points. One thing that the Mariners do have on their side this weekend is the past history between these two. They have thus far met 20 times in the competition with the Glory winning just two of these matches. The Mariners have won 13 of these including their past 3 meetings, giving them one of the more damning head to head records of any two sides in the league. As good as the Mariners have been previously though, there are just too many factors swaying towards a comfortable home win here. Between the travel, recent form and a raucous home crowd the Glory should secure a comfortable win and sneak ever closer to an elusive home final.

Kiss of Death
Glory 2-0 Mariners

Mariners Line Up

1. Mathew Ryan (gk)
2. Daniel Mcbreen
3. Joshua Rose
4. Pedj Bojic
6. Patrick Zwaanswijk
7. John Hutchinson
9. Bernie Ibini
10. Adriano Pellegrino
11. Oliver Bozanic
12. Troy Hearfield
14. Michael McGlinchey
15. Brad Mcdonald
16. Trent Sainsbury
17. Tomas Rogic
18. Alex Wilkinson (C)
19. John Sutton
20. Justin Pasfield (gk)
21. Sam Gallagher
22. Mustafa Amini
23. Adam Kwasnik
Coach: Graham Arnold
Five To Be Omitted

In: 10. Adriano Pellegrino, 15. Brad Mcdonald, 21. Sam Gallagher, 22. Mustafa Amini (All Promoted), 4. Pedj Bojic (returns from suspension)

Out: Nil

Unavailable: Nil

Revived Gold Coast a catalyst for 'united' success

Robert **Di Fabio**

It's been a hectic period for Football Federation Australia, the A-League and notably besieged outfit Gold Coast United. Wild commentary from outspoken mining magnate Clive Palmer has unfortunately overshadowed the football on the pitch, prior to an exciting finale for the home and away A-League campaign.

The billionaire businessman, whose ill-mannered, obtuse and impudence towards the game, administrators and fans caused uproar throughout the football community, ultimately gave FFA little choice but to revoke his A-League licence – to the delight of the small, but fervent Gold Coast followers.

Palmer contested the decision in the Supreme Court of Brisbane; however his request for an injunction against the termination of his A-League licence was dismissed, leaving the head governing body in charge of the competition's cellar-dweller for the remaining four fixtures.

While Palmer is a much maligned figure on the Gold Coast, his vast fortune did provide football with a team in Australia's domestic competition. Now, with the boorish politician no longer connected with the Surfers Paradise club, the future remains precarious.

Last week at a Melbourne Heart business luncheon, FFA chairman Frank Lowy described Gold Coast as a 'spectacular failure' to engage and connect with its local community. Since its foundation in 2009, the club has failed to correspond with the local schools, junior clubs and promote what should have been a vibrant brand in one of Australia's fastest growing economies – an area that is anticipated to tip 700,000 residents by 2021.

When the club's hierarchy illustrates little concern for its market, nor its new breed of supporters, then it certainly gives the public a negative impression. Unfortunately, its egotistic style of management – capping the crowds to 5,000 at the gates, minimal community engagement and its somewhat arrogant and provocative manner of administration – alienated a colossal proportion of its potential target market.

When establishing a sporting organisation, the primary objectives are to create an energetic vibe around the club, promote the brand in a positive light and importantly make the local community feel as though it's their club – hoping for fans to forge a potent emotional connection with their newly adopted alliance.

Evidently, this hasn't occurred. Dwindling crowds have proceeded through Gold Coast's three-year tenure in the A-League. There has been a poor relationship between the club and the FFA, with the club's hierarchy barely lifting a finger to counter its problems.

FFA is yet to reveal whether it will seek new investors for next season and persevere with a franchise in south-east Queensland. With all the commotion engulfed on the Gold Coast, is there really a viable market for football, in the short to medium-term future at the very least?

In a nutshell, yes.

Under Palmer's rein, Gold Coast United was manifestly disconnected from the community. It wasn't a club for the people, or the city. Sooner or later, Mr. Palmer and his team of associates were always going to crash and burn.

Although, version two of the Gold Coast can be true to its name and 'unite' the people throughout the community. If new investors can be found – with a new community based model implemented – a new style of management adopted and a sound strategic plan instilled, then there is hope.

If the AFL can be a ripe success on the Gold Coast – a region traditionally overshadowed by the NRL – then there's justification for football to follow in its footsteps. In Gold Coast Suns' inaugural campaign last year, it welcomed 11,000 members, with an average home attendance of around 20,000. Bear in mind, the Suns triumphed on only three occasions, rooted to the bottom of the ladder.

These statistics verify how an astute business plan and a willingness to reach out to the community can convey the utmost success.

FFA chief executive Ben Buckley has made no secret about the governing body's desire to have a strong 10-team competition in the A-League next season. Whether that involves Gold Coast United, or a Western Sydney outfit– an area the FFA is desperate to exploit – remains unknown at present.

If the A-League were to contract to a nine-team league in 2012-13, then it could certainly have enormous ramifications on the upcoming TV rights agreement, which is due to expire at the conclusion of the next campaign. In 2006, FFA signed an exclusive seven-year agreement with Fox Sports, receiving approximately $18 million per annum. The length of the contract was often criticised, however it guaranteed the financial grounding for the sport, live matches and a first-class broadcast package.

Buckley, a protagonist in the AFL's 2007-2011 television deal, worth $780 million – an extraordinary figure at the time – is expected to warrant sums of $30-35 million per year for the new football TV deal, which could also comprise of a free to air component – an immense market, boasting 70 per cent of television's reach, a constituent neglected since the A-League's inauguration.

While Western Sydney is the palpable choice for expansion, the process needs to be manufactured in a careful and thorough manner. Lessons must be learnt from the Sydney Rovers' experiment – a bid lead by businessman Ian Rowden. The proposed club received a provisional licence in 2009 to join the A-League, planning to enter the competition in conjunction with Melbourne Heart in 2010-11. However, financial difficulties ultimately proved to be an impediment it couldn't overcome, having delayed its entry for another season before the FFA finally closed the curtain on the club.

Assuming that the money is there, a seven-month period doesn't allow for a constructive analysis on a Western Sydney venture. A market so important, it mustn't be rushed. The four rules of the marketing mix – product, price, place and promotion – must be carefully analysed to target the western market in the most productive manner possible.

After witnessing North Queensland Fury fold in traumatic circumstances last year – effectively hindering football's development in the Townsville region – the A-League can ill-afford for another expansion franchise to go under in as many years. The integrity of the competition is at stake, as well as a big cut of the TV rights' pie. A quick fix solution - displacing Gold Coast for a Western Sydney team – isn't the key to unlocking the golden charm for the FFA.

Western Sydney is an integral market for the FFA, although it shouldn't be used to underpin the death of Gold Coast United. The governing body must allow the glitter strip club to seek new investment, construct a viable ownership model and fulfil the potential that was thwarted by the incoherent Palmer production.

Follow Robert on Twitter @Robert-DiFabio

And now we await the silver lining of the Gold Coast saga...

MELBOURNE HEART

ELI BABALJ

Melbourne Heart

PHOTOS/GRAPHICS: ANITA MILAS

goal! Weekly

Transfer merry-go-round for Aussie Stars

By Damian Davies

With many of the European clubs now back after the winter break, and numerous Asian leagues in full swing, February has been a busier month on the pitch. The trend of transferring to Asia has continued, with the number of Aussies in Korea and China swelling. A few big names back from injury, and some highs and lows at international level.

Matt McKay: Rangers to Korea

Mile Sterjovski: Glory to China

Rostyn Griffiths: Mariners to China

David Carney: Uzbekistan bound

Transfers :- Asia certainly seems to be the destination of choice at the moment. Not only as a next step from the A League, but several players with recent European experience have also made the move.

Additions/changes to database: -
Julian Aguirre *(27 Jun 1991) - transferred to Gombak United, Singapore*
Hussein Akil *(3 May 1990) - transferred to Woodlands Wellington, Singapore*
Adrian Caceres *(10 Jan 1982) - transferred to Chirangrai United, Thailand*
David Carney *(30 Nov 1983) - transferred to Bunyodkor FC, Uzbekistan*
Rostyn Griffiths *(10 Mar 1988) - transferred to Guangzhou Evergrande, China*
Billy Konstantinidis *(21 Apr 1986) - transferred to AEP Iraklis, Greece*
Aaron Lennox *(19 Feb 1993) - loan to Maidenhead, England*
Calvin Lovric *(12 Sep 1992) - transferred to Portogruaro, Italy*
Josh Maguire *(22 Sep 1980) - transferred to Persires Bali Devata, Indonesia*
Matt McKay *(11 Jan 1983) - transferred to Busan I'Park, Korea*
Nick Modaffari *(25 Nov 1991) - transferred to Carpi FC 1909, Italy*
Kyle Nix *(21 Jan 1986) - transferred to Tamworth FC, England*
Mario Piraino *(6 Jul 1993) - transferred to Carpi FC 1909, Italy*
Richard Porta *(1 Aug 1983) - transferred to Nacional Montevideo, Uruguay*
Jonas Salley *(16 Mar 1982) - transferred to Nanchang Hengyuan FC, China*
Mile Sterjovski *(27 May 1979) - transferred to Dalian Aerbiu, China*
Milan Susak *(29 Jan 1984) - transferred to Tianjin Teda, China*
Nick Terezakis *(24 Jan 1993) - transferred to Vicenza, Italy*

Removed from database:-
Iain Fyfe *(3 Apr 1982) - transferred to Adelaide United*
Scott Gannon *(12 Mar 1988) - transfer to O-League cancelled*
Nikodin Matic *(28 Aug 1992) - released by Farnborough, uncontracted*
Kerim Tansel *(14 Mar 1993) - transferred to VPL*

Club Level:-
England (Premier League) – After two months out with a back injury, **Mark Schwarzer** (Fulham) returned to the starting line up. A bit scratchy first up away to powerhouse Manchester City, but then a pivotal role in claiming the next two victories. **Tim Cahill** is back in the starting eleven at Everton, who completed an impressive home win over Chelsea with Cahill seeing out the full ninety minutes. **Chris Herd** has just returned from a long injury lay off. Young Tottenham midfielder **Mass Luongo** is getting closer to an EPL debut after recently sitting on the bench against Liverpool.

England (Championship) – The star Aussie performer for February would have to be **Adam Federici**. He is on a streak of five clean sheets in succession as Reading suddenly find themelves up to third on the league table. This continues to be perhaps the defining season for **Rhys Williams** at Middlesbrough. He has now started 31 of 32 fixtures this season, more often than not seeing out the full ninety minutes. **Mile Jedinak** is certainly settling in to his new home, Crystal Palace. He was a regular starter for the month, and somehow went through the month without getting a yellow card!! **Neil Kilkenny** (Bristol City) continues his inconsistent season, being in and out of the starting eleven as his team move closer to relegation. **Shane Lowry's** transfer to Millwall has been positive for both player and club. Shane has been starting each fixture and playing a key role in giving his club some breathing space from relegation.

England (League One) – Alex Cisak remains in goal at Oldham Athletic, restricting another Aussie in **Dean Bouzanis,** to bench warming duties. Unfortunately clean sheets have been rare this campaign, resulting in very inconsistent results for the team.

England (League Two) – Shane Cansdell-Sheriff (Shrewsbury Town) is not getting a lot of game time of late. His team currently sit third on the table and will be hoping Shane rediscovers some form for the run home.

Italy (Serie B) – Carl Valeri plays the full game each week for Sassuolo as they continue there titanic struggle for automatic promotion. Having conceded only one goal in the past five outings, the stopping abilities of Valeri are certainly proving important.

Italy (Serie C2) – Christian Esposito continues to start most weeks for FC Catanzaro and has now scored four goals this campaign. Great to see him finally get a good run of games without injury.

Germany (Bundesliga) – On paper, the Aussie presence is strong, however not that many minutes being chalked up. **Mitch Langerak** (Borussia Dortmund) did manage a rare start in a cup tie where he did keep a clean sheet. **Matthew Leckie's** limited game time saw him end the month in the reserves to gain match fitness. **Rukavytsya** could only manage one start during February as his side moved into the relegated places.

Germany (2. Bundesliga) – Robbie Kruse has been largely unsighted recently at Fortuna Dusseldorf.

Netherlands (Eredivsie) – Brett Holman has added "assist provider" to his resume in another productive month for him at AZ. Our Aussies at Utrecht have done nothing spectacular recently, struggling with injury in some cases.

Scotland (Premier) – in terms of minutes played, **Ryan McGowan** continues his good season, having now made 15 starts this campaign.

Scotland (Second division) – similar story for **Beau Busch** at Arbroath. He has now started 16 times so far in 2011/12.

Greece (Super League) – in a rare start for the season, **Apostolis Giannou** managed an impressive brace against OFI. Hopefully the start of a good run for him, but Australia beware, he has been recently playing for the Greek U21 side so a senior cap may be getting nearer.

Turkey (Super Lig) – despite transfer rumours and pay disputes, **James Troisi** (Kayerispor) continues to deliver on the pitch. He has now scored 8 times in his 18 starts. After a long injury break, **Ersan Gulum** is now easing his way back into the Beskitas team. Until he steps on the pitch for Turkey, he is still eligible for the Socceroos and will be discussed in this monthly review. Never say never, I remind you on **Ognenovski and Rhys Williams** who flirted with other football nations before appeared for the Socceroos.

Portugal (Liga de Honra) – after many years in the US system, European football must agree with **Caleb Patterson-Sewell**. He has played every minute for Atletico so far this season. Here's hoping last weekends clean sheet and 3 points is the start of a turnaround for his team's fortunes after a mid-season slump.

France (CFA) - rarely mentioned Aussie **Kearyn Baccus**, has scored in his past two outings for Le Mans II. Another to have seen limited minutes of late, would be good to see a strong finish to the season from him.

Austria (Bundesliga) - the perhaps overdue transfer of **James Holland** (Austria Wien) has been an instant success, starting the first three games since his move.

U.A.E. (UFL) – the reinvigorated **Mark Bresciano** (Al Nasr) still has not missed a minute in his 12 appearances and has moved his goal haul to 8. **Lucas Neill** (Al Jazira) has played every minute of his club's campaign this season so far. Perhaps the warm weather agrees with them both!

India (I-League) – Tolgey Olzbey (East Begal) continues his profilic scoring, now on 13 goals but trialling in the Golden Boot by some margin.

Indonesia (Super League) - somewhat difficult to follow this league, but I can tell you that **Sean Rooney** (Deltras), **Robbie Gaspar** (Persib) and **Steve Hesketh** (Arema) are starting every week.

Malaysia (Super League) - Michael Baird and Brendan Gan seem to be a class above at the moment. They are dominating games however Sabah still only sit mid table.

New Zealand (Premiership) – George Slefendorfas (Canterbury United) conitnues to lead the race for the Golden Boot. Aided by a bag of five goals (!) against Hawkes bay in early February.

Injuries:- A couple of guys back on the pitch after decent breaks. **Mark Schwarzer** came straight back in as starting keeper. **Ersan Gulum** has started once, but being used cautiously. **Chris Herd** is coming through the reserves but did sit on the pine for the seniors straight away, which is a great vote of confidence. Adding to those with more longer term injuries are **James Wesolowski** (shoulder) and a story is doing the rounds that **Ljubo Milicevic** may have been released from Hajduk Split after succumbing to yet more injury problems.

Club Competitions:-
Europe
(UEFA Champions League) No Aussies in action although **Scott Chipperfield's** Basel take a 1-0 advantage into the second leg against Bayern.
(UEFA Europa League) No fixtures in February as **Brett Holman** (AZ) is the last Aussie standing.

Reserves and Youth:- Starting with the "NextGen Series", despite progressed to the finals, captain **Mass Luongo** (Tottenham) has seen his team withdrawn from the tournament after fielding an ineligible player. Many Aussies now find themselves playing in Development Squads in the UK, an equivalent to reserve team football. **Luongo, Gallifuoco** (Tottenham), **Ryan Williams** (Fulham), **Jackson Irvine and Nick Feely** (both Celtic) all fall into this category. **Bailey Wright** is captaining Preston North End reserves at the age of 19. **Brad Jones** has made his comeback to the Liverpool reserves and **Andreas Govas** (Troyes) is serving an apprenticeship after his recent transfer. **Costa Andricopoulos** (Anorthosis) continues in the U21 starting eleven but pushing into the seniors at his club is proving difficult. **James Stojcevski** (16) has started his career in Germany in a promising fashion.

International level :- From the disappointment of missing out on Olympic qualification, to the thrilling come from behind victory at AAMI Park. The result was pleasing, but more so was the re-emergence of **Bresciano** and arguably **Harry Kewell.** Not to mention the growing star of **Alex Brosque.** Given that several of our top players did not come to Melbourne, Holger has a little more depth than perhaps a few people realised as we move towards the next stages of world Cup qualifying.

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Postponements and wins for Melbourne sides

Referee Brenton Hayward is on the spot to watch Luke O'Dea (Victory) fight to keep possession under pressure from Brandon O'Neill (Glory). Byron Hudson follows athe action closely PHOTO: JOHN PUNSHON

Luke O'Dea (Victory), who scored the only goal in the match, lets fly as Brandon O'Neill (Glory) ties to close him down. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

Results

Gold Coast United Vs Brisbane Roar
Central Coast Mariners Vs Sydney FC
AIS 1-4 Adelaide United
Melbourne Victory 1-0 Perth Glory
Newcastle Jets 2-3 Melbourne Heart

NYL Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	P
1 CC Mariners	17	11	2	4	41	16	25	35
2 Perth Glory	18	9	5	4	36	31	5	32
3 Brisbane Roar	17	9	4	4	50	33	17	31
4 Melbourne Heart	18	8	2	8	35	37	-2	26
5 Sydney FC	17	7	3	7	40	31	9	24
6 Gold Coast United	15	7	3	5	33	30	3	24
7 Adelaide United	18	6	5	7	30	34	-4	23
8 Newcastle Jets	17	5	5	7	27	29	-3	20
9 AIS	18	5	1	12	28	59	-31	16
10 Melbourne Victory	17	4	2	11	15	34	-19	14

By Daniel Quinn

This last round of the National Youth League (NYL) had only two games after two postponements and a cancellation.

Gold Coast United and Brisbane Roar's clash was postponed due to the Gold Coast Saga over the past week or so and with FFA now is charge of Gold Coast and it is unknown if the game will be played or not.

Likely Premiers Central Coast Mariners and Sydney FC's game at Pluim Park was postponed due to heavy rain fall on the Central Coast in the past few days. FFA are yet to announce a rescheduled date.

AIS v Adelaide cancelled after an hour

AIS v Adelaide at AIS Athletics Track in Canberra on Saturday was abandoned after an hour due to horrible conditions.

The referee decided to call it off after 61 minutes because the pitch was unplayable and even the local ducks made their way across the pitch for a little paddle.

Adelaide were 4-1 up after Allan Welsh gave his side the lead on eight minutes before Awer Mabil extended that lead four minutes later.

Dion Kirk with his first and Welsh with his second soon after gave the Reds a 4-0 lead.

Michael Taurasi grabbed a goal back for the hosts after the half hour mark before the referee called it off after 61 minutes.

Victory hold on to first-half O'Dea header

Melbourne Victory have held onto a first-half header by Luke O'Dea to defeat second placed Perth Glory 1-0 at Kingston Heath on Sunday.

Victory were able to hold on to record their fourth win of the season and remain two points behind the AIS on the bottom with both sides having postponed games to play.

Perth's inability to win means the title is Central Coast Mariners who too have a postponed game to play.

Melbourne Victory coach Darren Davies is delighted how his side has changed things around since the start of the season.

"I thought we played very well. I thought we passed the ball very well and it was actually very nice to see it all come together. At the start of the season we were trying to implement a new style of play, a new philosophy and we struggled results wise but that wasn't the problem, it was always about the development of the players and they way we wanted to play and towards the middle of the season we got a little bit closer and now all of a sudden the boys have picked up a few results playing the right way."

Davies is obviously very pleased with how his side played in the 1-0 victory.

"At the weekend that was probably one of our best performances. We passed the ball particularly well on a nice pitch and we scored a good goal and we kept a clean sheet so it all came together at the weekend which was pleasing."

Heart withstand Jets fury to take three points

Melbourne Heart have withstood Newcastle Jets onslaught of attacks to defeat the Jets 3-2 at Adamstown Oval on Sunday.

On 28 minutes Newcastle opened the scoring when Marko Jesic shot from the edge of the box but that was blocked before Bradbery ran onto the end of the ball to volley into the far corner.

Soon after Jesic should have doubled the lead but was pushed wide before shooting into the side netting.

But only a couple minutes later Heart punished the Jets when Nick Kalmar equalised with an empty net after 'keeper Jack Duncan failed to clear with his punch.

Just after the break Heart took the lead Stipo Andrijasevic made his way into the box before firing which Duncan could only parry David Williams ran onto the rebound and smashed it home.

Andrijasevic on the hour mark though was sent off for the second time this season with an elbow on Taylor Regan.

Haliti had another great chance to get onto the scoresheet but headed onto the crossbar from Virgili's cross.

Dunn then kept his side in the lead denying Haliti from an acute angle.

On 75 minutes Heart were given a penalty as Daniel Peluso was pushed over by Sam Galloway. Zac Walker stepped and buried the ball into the next sending Duncan the wrong way.

In stoppage time Virgil got onto the scoresheet to reduce the deficit to one when he got on the end of Anthony Ragusa's through-ball before finishing into the corner.

Haliti had a huge chance to take a point soon after but headed into the hands of Dunn.

North Geelong win Geelong Cup in a landslide

By Roy Hay

North Geelong demolished Corio by eight goals to one in the final of the City of Greater Geelong Cup at Bell Park Sports Club last Sunday night.

When the teams met at an earlier stage in the tournament, North just got home by three goals to two with a last minute winner from Nathan Long.

In the final however, the class of the Division One State League team overwhelmed their Provisional League opponent.

Michael Anderson had a huge impact on the game.

He was booked for a challenge on Corio keeper Alec Kitanovski in the seventh minute, but four minutes later he fired in a grounder, which took a wicked bounce in front of Kitanovski and went into the net via his hand and the inside of the post.

Two minutes later Anderson had his second as he was in space and able to lob the ball over the stranded keeper.

Alan Paleka came up for a corner kick which was not cleared and he forced the ball over the line to give North a three-nil break and the result effectively decided.

Corio did have the ball in the net soon after but the offside flag cut short their celebration.

It remained at three-nil to North, till just after the hour mark, when Anderson cut loose and completed a stunning hat-trick inside five minutes.

Robbie Zadworny intercepted an attempt by Corio to play out from the back and Anderson finished it off, then the latter broke through for a solo goal and finally he beat the keeper in a race for a loose ball.

Both sides were making a string of substitutions and Corio took advantage when Mijo Marinovic scored from a cross by Dusko Novakovic.

Zadworny then broke away for another solo goal and the tally was completed by Callum Ferguson in 82nd minute.

North Geelong celebrate with the City of Greater Geelong Cup. Photo: Roy Hay.

This was the largest winning margin in the 31-year history of the Geelong pre-season Cup and equaled the highest aggregate score in a final.

Robbie Zadworny won the best and fairest award, Nathan Long of North Geelong was top scorer and North also won the fair play trophy.

Referee of the tournament was Oleg Grygorian the attendance at the tournament was the highest it has been for several seasons, showing that there is lots of life in this competition.

In the match for third place, Geelong Rangers came back from a goal down to beat host club, Bell Park, by two goals to one.

Ifeayani Iheanacho finished off an excellent Bell Park attack down the left in the 35th minute.

Park's young and lightweight attack had foundered on the Rangers' defence to that point, but this lifted their confidence and for a while they threatened to add to their lead.

Their best chance came in the 55th minute when Anthony Sirocuk got to the byeline and cut the ball back for Chris Newman who fired the ball just wide from right in front of goal.

Referee Mick Opperman spotted a bit of shirt tugging in the Bell Park penalty area in 62 minutes and James Blackburn buried the penalty which resulted.

That lifted Rangers and three minutes later Angelo di Mauro could only parry a Troy Hardy shot and Blackburn followed up for his second and the winning goal.

Park fought hard to the end, but Rangers deserved third place overall.

Macedonian Cup 2012

By Nick Taseski

On December 22, 2009 & January 8, 2010 the Macedonian Clubs of Victoria met and agreed to resurrect the annual tournament which had been absent in almost a decade, the Macedonian Cup of Victoria.

The tournament aims to bring together all the Macedonian Clubs to build cohesion between our clubs, so we can continue to work collectively towards building and uniting our community and the continued success and support of our clubs in Victorian Football.

The motto for the tournament is "Bringing the Macedonian Community together"

A representative committee of all Macedonian Clubs has been formed and will be responsible for managing the tournaments. The tournament is an annual event and the hosting of the tournament will be rotated amongst all the clubs.

The first year the tournament was held at Paisley Park, the home of Altona Magic, after a ballet draw, Geelong United was drawn to be the second host in 2011. This year we see the tournament moved north to Lalor United in Thomastown. The dates of the tournament are 10th and 11th March, 2012

The Macedonian Cup has three competitions that clubs can compete for.

1. The Senior Men's- The Premier event of the Tournament.
2. Reserves- To involve and encourage the younger boys in the community.
3. Open Women's- To encourage and involve the women's teams as a part of our community.

The participating teams will be divided into two groups who will play a round robin with the top two teams of each group playing off in the finals.

The Competing clubs in 2012 will be as followed: Altona Magic (Vardar), Geelong (Makedonija), Keilor Wolves (Pelagonia), Noble Park (Makedonija), Plenty Valley Lions (Lerin), Preston Lions (Makedonija), Sydenham Park (Makedonija), Lalor United (Sloga) and Shepparton (Makedonija).

Previous Winners of the cup:
Altona Magic (Vardar) 2010
Geelong (Makedonija) 2011

The Cup committee would like to invite all football supporters of Victoria to come down and enjoy a day or two of football, or even a famous traditional 'Cevapi Roll' as served at our clubs.

Couch Potato

* ALL TIMES ARE AEDT

SBS

SBS ONE

Sunday March 11th
10:30 AM UEFA Europa League Highlights
11:00 AM Les Murray's Football Feature
12:00 PM UEFA Champions League Magazine Program

Monday March 12th
04:30 PM FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:05 PM The World Game

Wednesday March 14th
06:30 AM UEFA Champions League - Round of 16 Live (2nd Leg)

Thursday March 15th
06:30 AM UEFA Champions League - Round of 16 Live (2nd Leg)
11:05 PM UEFA Champions League Hour

Friday March 16th
06:45 AM UEFA Europa League - Round of 16 Live (2nd Leg)

SBS TWO

Monday March 12th
09:30 PM The World Game

Wednesday March 14th
09:40 PM UEFA Champions League - Round of 16 match (2nd Leg).

Thursday March 15th
08:30 PM UEFA Champions League Hour

one

Saturday 10th March
03:00 am Arsenal TV Champions League Arsenal V AC Milan

Monday 12th March
03:00 am Bundesliga Bayer Leverkusen V Bayern Munich
10:00 am Serie A Palermo V Milan

Tuesday 13th March
01:30 am Magic Of The FA Cup Tottenham Hotspurs' Greatest Goals
02:30 am FA Cup Classics Manchester United V Arsenal 4th Round 07/08
03:00 am Football: Arsenal TV Arsenal V Newcastle United

Wednesday 14th March
02:00 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
03:00 am Liverpool TV Sunderland V Liverpool
06:00 am Serie A Napoli V Cagliari
08:00 am Serie A Genoa V Juventus

Thursday 15th March
02:30 am The Serie A Highlights Show
03:00 am Bundesliga Bayern Munich V Hoffenheim
05:00 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights
06:00 am Magic Of The FA Cup Chelsea's Greatest Games

SETANTA SPORTS

Saturday 10-Mar
Bundesliga Stuttgart v Kaiserslautern 6:25am LIVE
Blue Square Premier Kidderminster v Fleetwood 11:15am 1st Airing
Scottish Cup Quarter Final Hearts v St Mirren 11:25pm LIVE

Sunday 11-Mar
Bundesliga Augsburg v Dortmund 4:25am LIVE
Ligue 1 Lyon v Lille 6:45am LIVE
Ligue 1 Teams TBC 9:00am 1st Airing

Monday 12-Mar
Scottish Cup Quarter Final Dundee United v Celtic 12:10am LIVE
Scottish Cup Quarter Final Motherwell v Aberdeen 2:40am LIVE
Bundesliga Schalke v Hamburg 4:45am 1st Airing
Ligue 1 Montpellier v Caen 6:45am LIVE
Primera Division Teams TBC 9:05am LIVE
Bundesliga Werder Bremen v Hannover 11:15am 1st Airing
Ligue 1 Teams TBC 1:00pm 1st Airing
Primera Division Teams TBC 2:45pm 1st Airing

Tuesday 13-Mar
Eredivisie Ajax v RKC 4:00am 1st Airing
Eredivisie NAC Breda v PSV 8:30am 1st Airing

Wednesday 14-Mar
Eredivisie De Graafschap v AZ 3:30pm 1st Airing

Thursday 15-Mar
Copa Libertadores 2nd Stage Cruz Azul v Corinthians 11:55am LIVE

FOX SPORTS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE LIVE
Times listed are 7 minutes prior to kick-offs.

Week 30
Sat Mar 10 Bolton v QPR 11.38 pm Fox 1
Sun Mar 11 Chelsea v Stoke 1.53 am Fox 1
Sun Mar 11 Sunderland v Liverpool 1.53 am Fox 2
Sun Mar 11 Aston Villa v Fulham 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 11 Wolves v Blackburn 1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 11 Everton v Tottenham 4.23 am Fox 1
Mon Mar 12 Man Utd v West Brom 1.53 am Fox 1
Mon Mar 12 Swansea v Man City 1.53 am Fox 2
Mon Mar 12 Norwich v Wigan 2.53 am Fox 3
Tue Mar 13 Arsenal v Newcastle 6.53 am Fox 1

ENGLISH FOOTBAL LEAGUE
Sun Mar 11 Brighton v Portsmouth 1.56 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 11 Bristol City v Cardiff 4.00 am Fox 2
Sun Mar 11 Middlesbrough v Leeds 11.11 pm Fox 3

A-LEAGUE LIVE
Fri Mar 9 Jets v Gold Coast 7.30 pm Fox 1
Sat Mar 10 Heart v Wellington 5.00 pm Fox 1
Sat Mar 10 Sydney v Victory 7.30 pm Fox 1
Sun Mar 11 Brisbane v Adelaide 4.30 pm Fox 3
Sun Mar 11 Glory v Mariners 7.00 pm Fox 3

FOX SPORTS FC
Every Tuesday 8.30 pm

Alvaro Rodriguez's

Planet Football
Papa New Guinea

NAME: Papua New Guinea
CAPITAL: Port Moresby
POPULATION: (2011 approx.) 6,187,591
CONFEDERATION: OFC
INTERNATIONAL HONOURS: South Pacific Games bronze-medalists 1969, 1987
FIFA WORLD RANKING: 194th
OCEANIA NATIONS CUP APPEARANCES: 1980, 2002

WHO ARE YA?

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea (nearly 2000 kilometres north of Darwin); the western half comprised of the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua (formerly a single unit known as Irian Jaya before 2002).

Like the island as a whole, the country is home to a cultural and geological beauty and diversity almost unparalleled anywhere else.

Birds of paradise, tree kangaroos and the Cuscus possum are just some of the colourful fauna, inhabiting lush rainforests. Civilisation on the island as a whole stretches back some 50,000 years, with some 850 recognised languages spoken across a plethora of ethno-cultural groups of Papuan and Austronesian roots.

It was in the 19th Century when this hitherto-unknown land(despite brief visitations by Portuguese and Spanish seafarers in the 1500s) was finally claimed by a European power, namely Germany in 1884 although its hold consisted of Papua's northeast and a cluster of small islands to the north; this was given to Australia in the wake of Germany being stripped of its colonial possessions after World War I; the portion south of this had been administered separately by the British, also from 1884 onwards.

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 and especially the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 2 years later suddenly made the island a key frontline in Australia's wartime defence against Japanese expansionism, and some of our country's most harrowing campaigns of the entire conflict, particularly the Kokoda Trail took place on New Guinean soil.

At war's end the island was again subject to border revisions from the international community, this time the merging of the British and Australian-administered portions in 1949 under Australian control, until independence in 1975 under the present name of Papua New Guinea, remaining within the British Commonwealth.

Though the country has been a stable democracy since independence, it has faced issues in the form of the Bougainville question(relating to secessionist movements on Bougainville Island, which geographically is part of the Solomon Islands but politically is part of PNG) and even more-fanciful questions of pan-Papuan unity, which are destined to come to nothing as long as Indonesia is committed to retaining the western half of the island.

The late Sir William 'Bill' Skate was a controversial Prime Minister of PNG and much-travelled politician generally(even ascending to acting Governor-General in the early Noughties) throughout his career spanning the 1990s until his death in 2006, although thankfully his tenure and the country's post-1975 history has been free from mass political-conflict such as military coups in Fiji and the struggle for East Timorese independence/sovereignty prior to 2002.

Hekari United pose before their 2010 Club World Cup clash vs. Al-Wahda from the UAE.

Just in case the GPS isn't working...

SO WHAT YOU DONE?

Although PNG has the distinction of being the only country in the world where rugby league is the outright national sport, football has always been modestly popular despite a barren international pedigree.

Although a regular qualifier for the South Pacific Games' football event, PNG's best finish is third-place on 2 occasions (1969 and 1987).

Despite first contesting and qualifying for the Oceania Nations Cup in 1980 it has only qualified once since(in 2002), and did not start contesting the World Cup qualifiers until France '98, where they showed early promise by drawing 1-1 with the Solomon Islands and defeating Vanuatu 2-1 to advance to the next stage alongside the Solomons, getting off to a dream start upsetting the All Whites 1-0 in Port Moresby (it still remains the country's highest-profile win), but were brought back to Earth with losses to Fiji and a 7-0 hiding from a vengeful New Zealand in the return fixture in Auckland, thus unceremoniously bundled out of 2nd. round-Group 2. Opting to sit out Korea/Japan 2002, they returned to the WC qualification fray for Germany '06, bowing out in first-round Group 2 by two points beneath Fiji - a top-two spot would have seen PNG through to the second-round, which doubled as the 2004 Oceania Nations Cup.

And because the country sat out the 2007 South Pacific Games (which doubled as the preliminary stage of Oceania qualifiers) they were ineligible to reach South Africa 2010.

However this was offset considerably by the events described below after South Africa...

BIG CLUBS

That year, the country's biggest club Hekari United (a 5-time winner of the Telikom NSL Cup, PNG's national league) qualified for the Oceania Champions League (O-League) for the 2nd. consecutive year, but above all expectations bettered their previous year's showing by WINNING the tournament 4-2 on aggregate in the two-leg Final vs. NZ's Waitakere United, the winners 2 years prior (and Oceanian representatives in the Club World Cup as a result). In so doing Hekari made history by becoming the first non-Aussie or Kiwi club to represent Oceania in the world club showpiece, winning hearts the world over for their spirited display against Al-Wahda, reigning champions of tournament hosts the UAE, despite losing 3-0 in the straight-knockout tie and thus leaving for home almost as soon as they had arrived. Sadly they failed to repeat the feat last year, and have already been eliminated from progressing out of their group in the current O-League edition.

Other clubs of note include fellow Port Moresby sides Gelle Hills United, Casino Hotel/Rapatona Tigers and Eastern Stars FC.

REP YOUR COLORS

Nicknamed the Kapuls(a local name for the Cuscus possum), the PNG NT wears an-all red strip, although have donned more exotic designs in the past. Hekari wore a red/white/black-jagged strip in their 2010 O-League campaign but ditched it for a more demure greyish-white top/black shorts & white socks scheme for the CWC proper, whilst Eastern Stars wear a blue shirt/white shorts kit although have also worn an all-white strip with green trims.

MATCHWINNERS

Long before anyone seriously entertained the notion of PNG players one day gracing a FIFA finals tournament, striker Manis Lamond flew the flag for PNG football across a 17-year career in Australia's NSL, first with Canberra City before moving to powerhouse Sydney United(then Croatia), where between 1988 and '94 he played 181 games and scored 30 goals during one of the club's golden periods; culminating in his being named in the Sydney Croatia/United Team of the Century in 2008, the club's 50th anniversary. He rejoined United in 1994 after an ill-fated stint at APIA Leichhardt(by then in the NSW state league) for a further 48 games and 15 goals, eventually winding down his career at Marconi and Newcastle Jets in their original 'United' guise in the late '90s, having also made his only 2 appearances for PNG in 1996. A sample of his work from the 1991/92 NSL season can be seen in this Youtube video [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhrT3r1NN4U].

Of the current crop, midfielder David Muta(also the national captain) was one of Hekari's homegrown contingent(as most of the side's stars were Fijian and Solomon imports such as Osea Vakatalesau and Henry Fa'arodo) in that historic O-League and CWC '10 campaign, not least because he was the side's captain despite the presence of older, experienced heads worthy of the armband; fellow midfielder Andrew Lepani is another dual national/Hekari player. Of the minuscule foreign-based contingent the Davani brothers Alex and Reggie ply their trade for Brisbane City (Andrew Lepani's brother Nathaniel is himself an ex-Brisbane City player)and Sunshine George Cross in the QLD and VIC state leagues respectively, whilst striker Gari Moka plays for Nunawading City in the South-East Conference of Victorian State League Division 3.

SO WHAT NOW?

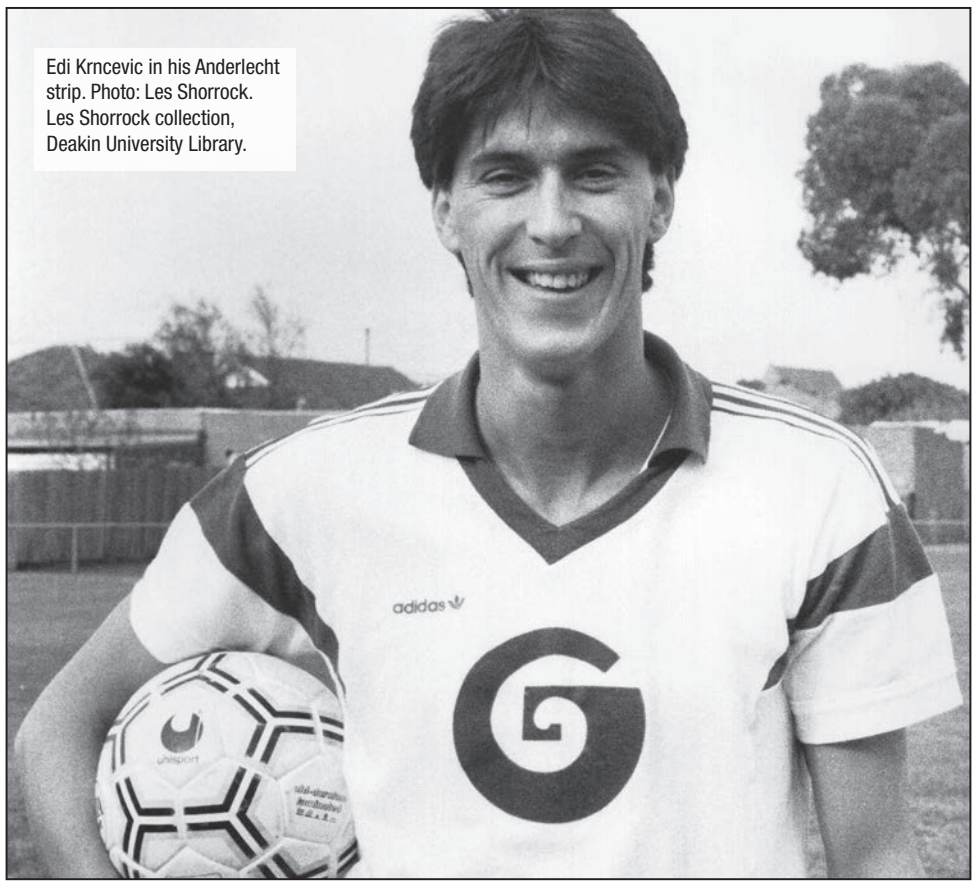
Coached by Australia's own Frank Farina since last year, the Kapuls face a bonafide Mission:Impossible to reach Brazil given they have been drawn with all 3 of Oceania's remaining powers (NZ, Fiji and the Solomons) in 2nd.round-Group B of WC qualifying.

No doubt this will be one of the biggest challenges ol' Fwankie has faced in his illustrious career as a player and coach but if he can at least instill some of the confidence and enthusiasm that characterised Hekari United's fairytale 2010 into his PNG squad, and perhaps bloods a few promising youngsters in the process, few in the PNG footballing community should regard his appointment as having been for nothing in the long run. Given the Kapuls remain one of the world game's uber-minnows, anything that elevates them to the next-highest rung should be considered an unmitigated positive.

Edi Krncevic

With Roy Hay

Australia's original soccer superstar



Edi Krncevic in his Anderlecht strip. Photo: Les Shorrock. Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Edi Krncevic was and is an Australian pioneer. Though he was not the first Australian to play at the highest level overseas, he showed a new generation of Australians that they could carve out a professional career in the game here and in Europe.

His stellar career included stints at Dinamo Zagreb in Croatia and Cercle Brugge, Anderlecht and FC Liege in Belgium, plus time in Germany and France. In Australia he turned out for Essendon Lions and then joined Marconi as an eighteen-year-old in 1979 for $9,000, playing alongside Ivo Prskalo, Peter Sharne, Mark Jankovics, Roberto Vieri, Gary Byrne, Alan Maher, Tony Henderson and John Russell. In 1980–81 sometimes more than half the Socceroo team were Marconi players. Krncevic made his international debut for the Socceroos while still 18, playing against Partizan Belgrade, New York Cosmos and New Zealand.

In the recent past he has been involved in the game as a player agent and an adviser to North Geelong in the Victorian State League and coach at South Melbourne. He has come full circle since he was born in Geelong on 14 August 1960 and started his football career as a junior with Corio. He turned up at the age of five and finally persuaded the coach to include him in an under-11 team. Not long afterwards he recalls, 'I went off to Ringwood on the bus with the rest of the team, without telling my mother and father. They were panicking until I finally got home.'

His parents moved to Melbourne, first of all to Carlton when he was seven, but then out to the new suburbs to Pascoe Vale. 'We should have stayed in Carlton. We had this long back yard where I played football and cricket. It would have been worth a fortune today,' he says. As a junior he joined Essendon Lions and was an Australian schoolboy representative in 1977–78. Lions was the old Ukrainian club, but it was taken over by the Croatian community and eventually evolved into Melbourne Croatia, now Melbourne Knights. The young Krncevic rubbed shoulders with Branko Culina and Socceroos Kenny Murphy, Billy Vojtek and Tommy Cumming.

Rudi Gutendorf selected him for the Young Socceroos and he played in all seven qualifying matches for World Under-20 Cup in 1979, scoring six goals. That year he scored 13 times for Marconi to help the club to its first minor premiership in the National Soccer League. Unfortunately, the club could not replicate that form in the finals series. Another 13 goals in 1980 saw Marconi into the finals in fourth place, but it was knocked out by South Melbourne in a seven-goal thriller in the semi-final.

In 1980 Krncevic played 19 games for Australia including matches against Czechoslovakia, England B (?), Fiorentina and Dinamo Zagreb. It was while visiting his family's original home in Zadar in Croatia on a tour with the Socceroos that he became aware of Dinamo Zagreb's interest in signing him as a player. Marconi wanted a huge fee, $80,000, for their young star, but in the end a reduced figure was agreed and it was actually paid by Harry Mrksa of Melbourne Croatia and Metro Travel, though he was reimbursed by Miro Blazevic, the Dinamo coach, according to Matthew Hall. Krncevic quickly adapted to the higher technical standard of Croatian football, bringing his Australian commitment and work rate to the game in that country. He rapidly became a crowd favourite scoring regularly to help Dinamo to win the Yugoslav national league in 1982, for the first time since 1958.

He and his young wife, Maggie, found life in Croatia difficult, however, and eventually the oppressive security and police presence got to them. Edi signed a pre-contract with Pisa in Serie A in Italy, but complications occurred and in the meantime Pisa was relegated and hence was not eligible to sign a foreign player. So the next move was to Duisburg in Germany in 1984, but that turned out to be hard for a foreigner with a young family and, though he played 18 games and scored three goals, it was clear that they would have to move again. In January 1985 he came back to Australia on holiday and played a game for Sydney Croatia but then came an offer from Cercle Brugge in Belgium and the beginning of a decade in Belgian football punctuated by a strange interlude at Mulhouse in France.

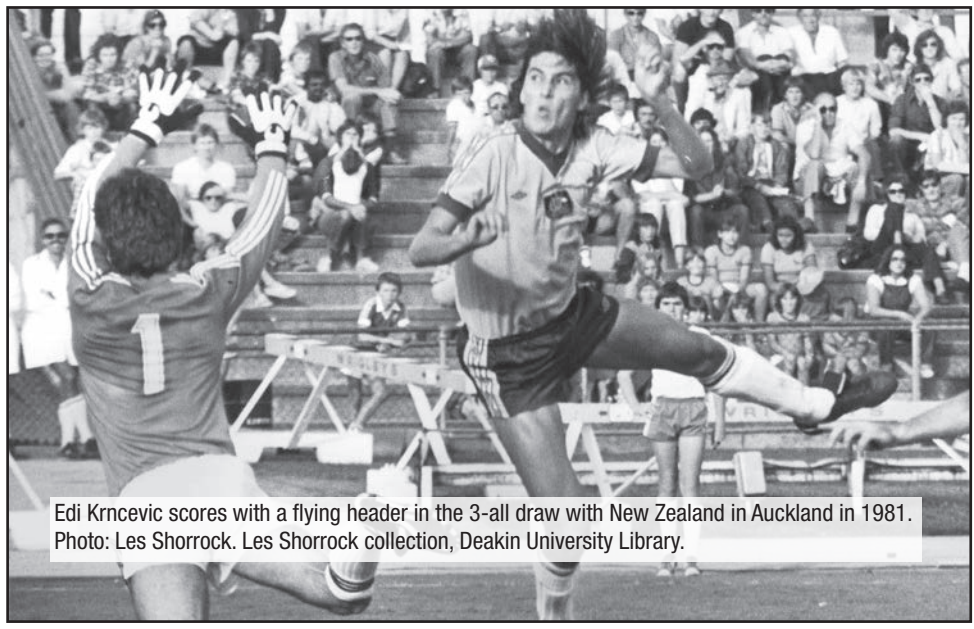
At Cercle Brugge, Edi led the club to the Belgian Cup in a penalty shoot-out against SK Beveren, scoring the critical penalty in 1985. This raised his profile in the country and he was back in Yugoslavia trying to sort out contract issues when he found that Anderlecht, the leading Belgian club, was determined to sign him. He helped Anderlecht to successive championships, played in the European Cup (now known as the European Champions League) and mixed with stars like Ari Haan and Enzo Schifo. An attack of hepatitis A threatened to end his career but he recovered and in his next season scored 23 goals in the league and 13 in European competitions, coming fourth top scorer in all of Europe. This stunning performance led to a belated recall to the Socceroos by Frank Arok against Israel in both World Cup qualifiers in 1989. But a loss to New Zealand and two draws with Israel ended another attempt to join the world in Italy.

Meanwhile, a bizarre interlude occurred in Edi's career when he signed for Mulhouse in France, only to find the club had gone into liquidation. Cannily Edi insisted his wages be paid in full before he signed but he was taken aback when the president arrived with a suitcase full of notes to complete the deal. The next year he was back in Belgium with FC Liege where he stayed for three years but then left in less than amicable circumstances. At one point the lawyer who eventually represented Jean-Marc Bosman in his landmark case which ensured freedom of movement at the end of a contract, the basis of the economic position of football players today, wanted to fight Edi's similar issue. Edi declined the offer.

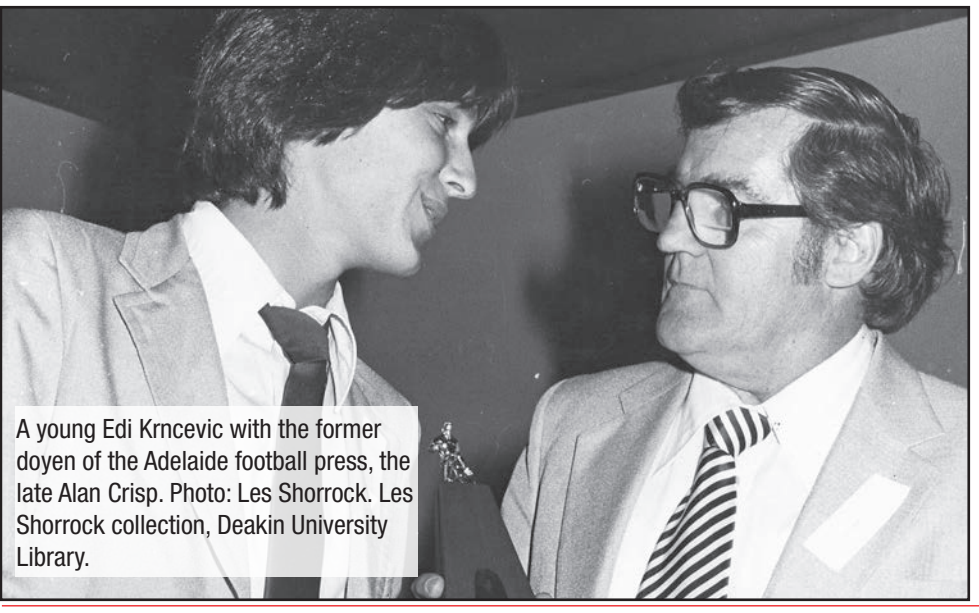
After Liege, Edi wound down his European adventure with spells at Aalst and Charleroi before returning to Australia where he played with Gippsland Falcons before embarking on a coaching career with the newly formed Carlton club in the NSL. He showed a marvellous touch from the outset taking a young Carlton side stiffened by the experience of Kresimir Marusic, John Markovski and David Cervinski to the Grand Final in its first season. He blooded a number of the current or recent Socceroos, including Marco Bresciano, Archie Thompson and Vince Grella. He brought a breath of fresh air to the Australian coaching scene. Once again he was the pioneer. He was the first of the overseas stars to return to contribute current European experience to the development of Australian talent. His teams played skilful, fast-moving football, but his style and manner seemed to ruffle more traditional Australian feathers and, ground down by the politics of the Carlton experiment, he parted company with the club. The lure of coaching proved strong however and in recent times he has been senior coach at South Melbourne. He is a member of the FFA Hall of Fame.

Edi Krncevic still has a lot to offer to the game here or abroad and has helped a number of young players secure contracts or trials in European football. Those who followed in his wake speak highly of his example and his assistance. The fact that he had showed what was possible for those who were prepared to make the sacrifices involved has helped to change the face of Australian football for the better. At 51 he is always looking out for new fields to conquer, so don't be surprised to see Edi pioneer another first for football in the near future.

Edi Krncevic gets in a header against Northern Ireland in 1980. Photo: Les Shorrock. Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.



Edi Krncevic scores with a flying header in the 3-all draw with New Zealand in Auckland in 1981. Photo: Les Shorrock. Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.



A young Edi Krncevic with the former doyen of the Adelaide football press, the late Alan Crisp. Photo: Les Shorrock. Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Edi Krncevic shows he's still got the fire in the belly, seen here coaching South Melbourne last season's VPL. Photo: Daniel Flis

ACL: Roar 0-2 FC Tokyo

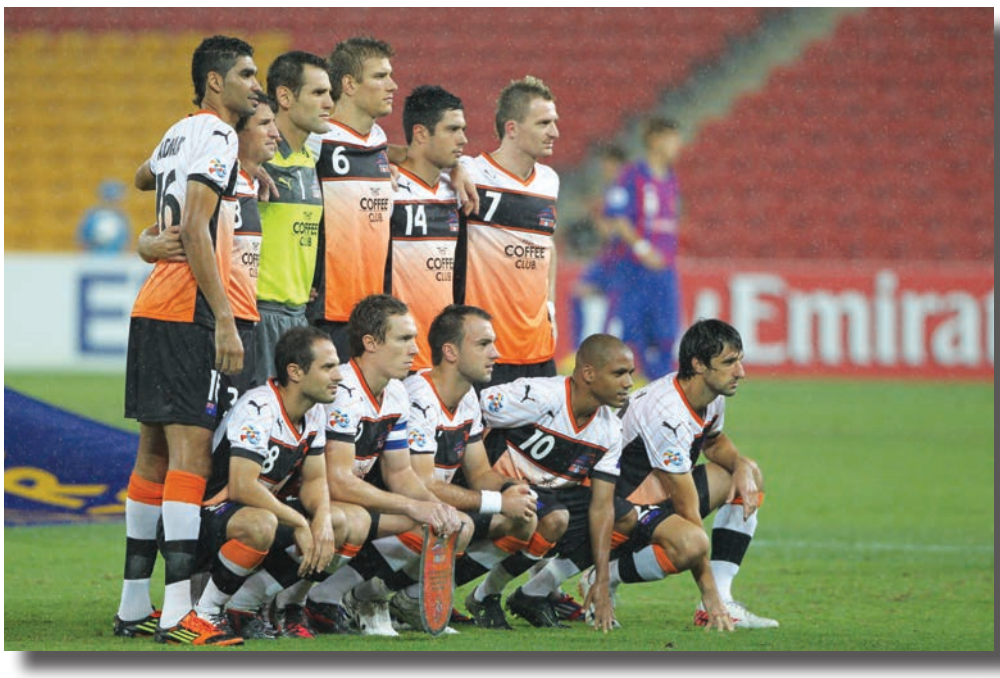
Photos: ADRIAN GAGLIONE

Roar's Besart Berisha plays the diplomat with FC Tokyo keeper Gonda.

The Brisbane Roar bench ducks for cover as the Queensland heavens open up.

Les Shorrock's Action Packed Picture Page

Brisbane Roar fans fly the Aussie flag in the Asian Champions League.



Brisbane Roar make history and prepare for their first ever foray into Asian football.

Mohammed Adnan adapts to the pace of ACL football.

The Roar wall stands tall as the J-League's FC Tokyo is on the attack.

FC Tokyo fans bring an international flavour to Brisbane.

V-LEAGUE PREMIERSHIP

Round Sixteen

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Richmond keeps alive its chances of survival

By Jimmy Soufis

Taylan Aksoy (centre) continued his sparkling goal scoring form bagging 4 in the sides first win of the season.

Ahmed Azzam (front) celebrates with his new teammates in the rout of Brimbank.

Andre Caro (left) once again lead his side to a commanding victory as he bagged 3 goals in the process.

Sofiane Soufi (front) & Leonardo Correa (back) continued their brilliant partnership in front of goals scoring a combined total of 7 in the win over Fitzroy.

Fitzroy FC 4-9 Ashburton FC

Round 16 kicked off with 8th placed Fitzroy taking on 7th placed Ashburton. \

The game begun with the green machine dominating possession before their talisman Sofiane Soufi headed home a brilliant throw from Harry Kitharidis to open the scoring, shortly after Soufi turned 2 tiger's defenders to double their lead. Shayan Rasidi dragged Fitzroy back into the game with a stunning half court strike but it was to be Soufi's night as he completed his hat-trick with a beautiful left foot chip.

Ashburton's foul count continued to grow as they conceded a 5th foul penalty which Rasidi converted with ease. Leonardo Correa's shot then hit the woodwork but Phil Robotis was there to grab his first goal in a few weeks.

Soufi was having a field day in front of goal, scoring a screamer to get his 4th and send his side into half time 5-2 in front. Fitzroy kicked off the second half in style with a beautiful Chris Yang through ball let in Richard Ferguson to give the tigers some hope of a comeback.

Although their chances of a comeback were short-lived as Soufi scored his 5th of the night to kill off the game before Correa got in on the act getting his first of the night. Tom Robinson a bit part player at Ashbruton even got his name on the score sheet Rasidi picked up his hat-trick late in the say but it was only a conciliation as the win sends Ashburton up into 5th place and on the brink of the top 4 while Fitzroy stay in 8th place.

Brimbank FC 3-9 FC Prahran

After seeing Fitzroy go down in the previous game Brimbank had the chance to make up some vital ground their rivals but they were up against a high flying Prahran outfit that despite losing to North Melbourne in the previous week were brimming with confidence.

Brimbank though got off to the better start with Alija Karic toe poking home the opener before Clint Mogoai equalized and Cameron Holmes gave Prahran the lead soon after. Burley defender Resit Culculoglu put Prahran 3-1 ahead before a huge mistake from Mohammed Kuzucu in the bruiser's goal let Maxi Avram open his account.

Emir Ameti showed some fight in the bruisers getting his first of the night. A stunning goal from Marcos Barbosa had Prahran 5-2 ahead before Barbosa again found the net to send his side into half time 6-2 in front.

The second half was looking a more defensive display from both sides before Culculoglu got 2 more quick goals to complete his hat-trick. Ameti got a brace before Hep Tran put some polish on the result. The win keeps Prahran 3rd while Brimbank blew a massive chance to gain ground on the top 8.

Pascoe Vale FC 9-3 FC Balwyn

Following Pascoe Vale's struggle against Ashburton last round Balwyn loomed as a danger game for the lions.

Things started well for the bullets as their inspirational captain Tony Imeri opened the scoring. Adam Husseini equalized with a deflected effort before Brenno Polati put the lions ahead just minutes later.

Husseini extended the lead not long after as Pascoe Vale's clinical finishing was a lesson for Balwyn as they wasted countless opportunities on goal.

Husseini completed a rare hat-trick for himself before Andre Caro found himself on the score sheet with Pascoe Vale leading 5-1 at half time. James Blackburn kicked off the second half in style opening his account for the night.

Caro doubled up his goals tally before 2 quick goals from Ivan Zilic and Ben Bodo gave the bullets a slight chance at a comeback. Andre Caro & Joao Da Silva rounded off the scoring to give the lions a comfortable 9-3 victory and keep in the hunt for the title while for Balwyn they drop into 7th place but have a game in hand.

FC Brunswick 5-9 Metropolitan FC

The next clash saw struggling Brunswick take on a resurgent Metropolitan. Jusuf Avdic opened the scoring for the sky blues before Tomo Grgic doubled the lead.

Matt Piga pulled one back for the bloods as they then got on a roll as Jose Portillio scored 2 quick goals followed by another to Mohammed Algorabi to have the bloods leading 4-2. Alexander Stevanovic pulled one back before half time to keep the sky blues in it. The second half got under way and it was one Tomo Grgic who proved the difference in the scoring 3 lightning quick goals to kill of the game.

Avdic added his second before Portillio pulled one back and Grgic put some polish on the result adding his 5th of the night the win put some distance between Metropolitan and 5th as for Brunswick the loss piled more misery on manager Nick Ignatidis as Brunswick's season looks in jeopardy sitting 3rd bottom.

North Melbourne 7-5 FC Essendon

After watching the rest of the top 4 record wins the pressure was on North Melbourne to keep their lead at the top and coming up against an unpredictable Essendon side it proved a little tricky.

Missing star shot stopper Christos Apostolakis they handed a chance to young Joe Baker who was looking to cement his place in the side, With returning Futsalroo Jonathan Barrientos it gave the vipers defense a real boost and it showed early with Mirza Pedic opening the scoring. Jonathan Barrientos opened his account with a brilliant passing move. Udit Dharwan pulled one back for Essendon before Gui Costa restored the 2 goal advantage for the vipers.

Anthony Hammer got his first for the night and gave Essendon a chance at half time trailing 3-2. Jonathan Barrientos doubled his total to open the second half. Ignat Filipovic got another back for Essendon as they kept the pressure on the champions. Adam Cooper then opened his account for the night but Essendon would not go away as Filipovic doubled up.

Cooper added his second before Dharwan got his second and had Essendon within a goal in the closing stages but they're dream was shattered when Cooper secured his hat-trick and the 3 points. The win keeps the vipers top while Essendon slump to 6th place but could be proud of their efforts.

Mickleham FC 2-8 FC Richmond

The final clash of the night saw a bottom of the table clash with Richmond having not won a game this season and Mickleham struggling it was a chance for the killer bees to finally get on the board.

Richmond opened the scoring through Noor Khoshaba. Giuseppe Amonail doubled their lead. Ben Gearboc got one back for Mickleham before Richmond's shining light Taylan Aksoy bagged a quick-fire hat-trick to seemingly kill off the game. Khoshaba got his second and sent his side into half time 6-1 ahead.

Ninos Emmanuel got Richmond off to a flyer in the second half. Iman Arjomand got one back for Mickleham but it was all in vein as Taylan Aksoy completed Richmond's first win of the season. The win helps the killer bee's make up ground on Mickleham but still sit 5 points adrift in the race to beat relegation.

V-League Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 North Melbourne FC	16	15	0	1	102	43	60	45
2 Pascoe Vale FC	16	14	2	0	117	45	72	44
3 FC Prahran	16	11	2	3	114	67	47	35
4 Metropolitan FC	16	8	2	6	126	92	34	26
5 Ashburton FC	16	7	2	7	94	89	5	23
6 FC Essendon	16	7	1	8	90	100	-2	22
7 FC Balwyn	15	7	0	8	71	75	-4	21
8 Fitzroy FC	16	6	1	9	65	88	-23	19
9 Brimbank FC	16	4	2	10	63	83	-20	14
10 CF Brunswick	16	4	1	11	69	97	-28	13
11 Mickleham FC	16	3	1	12	64	133	-69	10
12 FC Richmond	15	1	2	12	58	122	-64	5

Round 16 RESULTS Wed 7th March

- 6:30 Fitzroy FC v Ashburton FC 4 – 9
- 7:15 Brimbank FC v FC Prahran 3 – 9
- 8:00 Pascoe Vale FC v FC Balwyn 9 – 3
- 8:45 CF Brunswick v Metropolitan FC 5 – 9
- 9:30 North Melbourne FC v FC Essendon 7 – 5
- 10:15 Mickleham FC v FC Richmond 2 – 8

Round 17 CLASHES Wed 14th March

- 6:30 North Melbourne FC v FC Richmond
- 7:15 Fitzroy FC v FC Balwyn
- 8:00 Pascoe Vale FC v Metropolitan FC
- 8:45 Mickleham FC v CF Brunswick
- 9:30 Brimbank FC v Ashburton FC
- 10:15 FC Prahran v FC Essendon

Top Goal Scorers

1. Joao Da Silva	36
2. Maxi Avram	33
3. Sofiane Soufi	31
4. Alija Redzepovic	31

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FUTSAL OZ

Photos By
JIMMY SOUFIS & MATT MONTGOMERY

Compiled By Alvaro Rodriguez

WHAT'S HOT

A better week for Oz football ensued following the hijinks of the Clive Palmer/GCU ownership saga - our Socceroos dished out a 4-2 smacking to the Saudis in the WC qualifier at AAMI, with Alex Brosque stating his claim for regular selection with 2 goals; GCU themselves staked a claim to remain in the league with a spirited display against the Phoenix away despite losing, and from a Melbourne Victory perspective the Fans' Forum held on March 6 apparently gave fans much reason to anticipate next season, with the board and staff openly admitting many of the issues the fans have known about for some time now, and their intent to address them by rejuvenating the team from the top down. Also the beginning of Champions League action in Asia and its resumption in Europe is definitely something to be excited about, especially the chances of our 3 A-League representatives in the former. Can one of them emulate or even surpass Adelaide's achievements in the 2008 edition? We'll have to wait and see!

Alex Brosque's spell in Japan has sharpened the the skills of the striker

WHAT'S NOT

Melbourne Victory's season ending in the wet of the AAMI Park pitch vs. Newcastle only days after the aforementioned international in which Harry Kewell and Archie Thompson's creative sparks were fired by, quite plainly, superior players to who they play alongside week-in-and-out for MV, as evidenced by their failure to dominate the game - but as mentioned above, at least the club now has verbalised plans to remedy these and other problems. On the overseas front, Andre Villas-Boas was sacked by Chelsea after an unremarkable tenure at Stamford Bridge. Now far be it from me to equate Roman Abramovich with Clive Palmer as the former has the runs on the football club-ownership board Clive lacks but a young, shrewd tactician with silverware already to his name like AVB deserves much better treatment and working environment, dare I say, than to be at the beck-and-call of people who for all intents and purposes have no intimate knowledge and/or understanding of the professional game. I for one hope AVB finds a new workplace soon, but consider if Clive was still at GCU and wanted to splurge dosh on Miron's proper replacement...AVB at the Robina perhaps? Sadly we'll never know...

AVB for Robina? Sadly we'll never know...

Australia's Favourite Football Fanzine is now available at Melbourne Victory, Melbourne Heart, Newcastle Jets and Adelaide United home matches. Don't miss your copy!!!

goal! Weekly

The day that Frank Lowy spat the dummy

By Roy Hay

It is not unprecedented for the wealthy owner of a club to walk away from the game and refuse to play by the rules in place at the time.

In 1987, one president did just that after one round of the league season. His name was Frank Lowy. There are many differences between what happened with Sydney City and the Australian Soccer Federation (ASF) and the situation with Clive Palmer and the Football Federation Australia (FFA) today, but some interesting similarities too. In both cases the club owner/president believed that the authorities were taking the game in the wrong direction. In both cases they had strong objections to the financial model under which the league was operating and they could see no prospect of improvement. In both cases their clubs could not sustain attendances to match their playing performance.

The National Soccer League (NSL) began in 1977. Sydney City Hakoah was the most successful team on the field in the first ten years of the NSL and Frank Lowy was president of the Hakoah Social Club which bankrolled the soccer team for much of that time. Sydney City won the championship four times, finished top of the home and away leagues on six occasions and played some of the most entertaining football in the history of the league. But it could never attract a crowd to match its playing ability. The demise of Hakoah was a long time in the making.

Sydney City line up in 1984 prior to taking on South Melbourne at Middle Park. Back row: Tony Pezzano, Graeme Fletcher, Grant Lee, Alex Robertson, Gerry Gomez, Murray Barnes, John Kosmina. Front row: Paul Kay, Jean-Paul de Marigny, Willie Murray, Joe Watson, Jim Cant, Keith Falconer. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

In 1982 the Hakoah Social Club was fire bombed by people opposed to its support of Israel. In 1985 there was a riot at Pratten Park during a match with long time rival Sydney Olympic, which led some older members of the Jewish community to consider whether the association with soccer should continue. In 1984 after pressure from the various states, particularly Victoria and South Australia the NSL was split into two conferences in a vain hope that more local derbies would increase attendances. It did nothing to increase crowds for the league and for Hakoah it was a disaster as average crowds fell from 2011 in 1983 to 1019 in 1984.

In 1986 Hakoah signed Israeli star Eli Ohana on a short term loan for five matches, but the team only finished 5th in the league. By the end of 1986, Lowy's mind was made up. If the crowds did not pick up he would pull the plug on the Hakoah Social Club support of the football team, which had been the original raison d'etre for setting up the Social Club. That decision caused a heated and prolonged debate in the Hakoah ranks.

The 1987 NSL season began on Friday 28 March and the following day Sydney City played Sydney Olympic at E S Marks field. The crowd was 5,187 and Tommy McCulloch scored both goals in a two-nil win. On Sunday 30 March Hakoah Social Club held its Annual General Meeting. Lowy had already sent a letter to members in which he wrote:

'I say without qualification that we cannot afford to maintain a professional team any longer. Despite the sentimental arguments I can see no justification for our current level of funding. The cost of running the team could be $300,000 and $500,000 would be needed to maintain a top-line professional team in the near future. The decision of your board of directors to bite the bullet on this issue is a sad one. But we must be realistic. Our support for Sydney City will have to end sooner or later.'[i] <#_edn1>

Lowy won a two-thirds majority for his proposal to the AGM to withdraw from the NSL forthwith. That caused an outcry in the wider football community with many saying that Hakoah had treated the league with disrespect. Attempts to rescue the situation by transferring the ownership to Blacktown City or to a consortium led by Harry Michaels, who offered to buy the team for $650,000 failed. Meetings with the chair of the NSL Sam Papasavas proved unsuccessful.

Frank Lowy said at the time and in his biography that he was frustrated because the ASF and NSL leaders did not share his vision for the game. He had stood for the presidency of the ASF against Sir Arthur George and lost and he withdrew from both football and presidency of Hakoah at the end of 1988. He did not engage in a public campaign to undermine the ASF or the NSL and he did not try to set up a breakaway organization as Hakoah had done successfully in 1957 (that is another story) and Palmer has tried to do in 2011. Lowy left the Hakoah Social Club in a healthy state, but his influence on the game of football was not restored until 2003 following the Crawford Report and an appeal by the Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard.

[i] <#_ednref1> Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April 1987.

Sydney City Hakoah attendance 1980-87

Year	Aggregate home crowd	Highest	Lowest	Average
1980	3328			2558
1981	40683	6892	1200	2712
1982	33700	5658	1018	2246
1983	30169	6712	400	2011
1984	14267	2101	543	1019
1985	25442	8420	635	2312
1986				
1987	5187	5187	5187	

Source: Anthony Thomas Hughes, The Rise and Fall of Sydney Hakoah Soccer Football Club: A Case Study of Sport and Identity in Sydney's Jewsish Community 1923–1987, PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2003, p. 213.

Gold Coast United attendance 2009-2012

Year	Aggregate home crowd	Highest	Lowest	Average
2009-10	75347	10024	2616	5382
2010-11	51505	14783	1658	3434
2011-12	30218	6927	1141	3022

Sources: Hyundai A-League Media Guides 2009–2012
Andrew Howe, by email, 3.3.2012.

Sabella's homework duty; Vasco's Copa triumph

Latin Wrap

Francis **Fields**

Alejandro Sabella is making sure his national team players have his word with the Argentina coach remaining in Europe for various tasks.

Unión Española's Dagoberto Currimilla (left) battling against Universidad Católica's Matías Campos Toro in an all-Chilean mid-week affair in the Copa Libertadores.

Coach Sabella on homework duty

Argentina's national team coach Alejandro Sabella is on a mission with a European tour where has reunited with his colleague at FC Barcelona, Pep Guardiola to discuss various topics.

According to reports from Spanish daily Mundo Deportivo, the meeting was held for approximately 40 minutes at the Ciudad Deportiva in Sant Joan Despí. Further details were discussed but not revealed to the media although there was speculation that fundamentally the talks were directed upon Lionel Messi and his roles with both club and country.

The current captain of the Argentine national side was suspended in his club's 3-1 La Liga win at the Camp Nou last weekend to bottom-placed Sporting Gijón.

Sabella himself expressed his delight at the hat-trick Messi also scored last week in mid-week international duty against Switzerland in a friendly. "Messi is finally showing his capabilities on the pitch on par with his brilliant performances for his club", affirmed the national team boss.

Staying in Europe for the month to reunite with various respective club coaches to monitor the vast array of players available for national team call-up, Sabella also affirmed to reporters about his admiration for coach Guardiola and would like "ask several questions regarding his management skills".

Last weekend, Sabella was present for the Rome derby between Lazio and fierce rivals Roma. The coach expressed interest in the recovery of Roma defender Nicolás Burdisso, still out of action whilst also speaking with the club's Spanish coach Luis Enrique. On Wednesday, it was Mauricio Pochettino's turn to meet Sabella as the Espanyol coach was reported to be "open and cooperative". Another coach on the list to meet up is another countryman in Diego Simeone, current boss at Atlético Madrid.

Vasco claim first win in Libertadores

Brazil club Vasco da Gama picked up its first points in the Copa Libertadores with a 3-2 victory Tuesday over Peru's Alianza Lima.

In two other group matches, last season's runner-up Peñarol of Uruguay drew 1-1 with Universidad de Chile in Group 8, and Chilean clubs Universidad Católica and Universidad Española also drew 1-1 in Group 3.

In Group 5, Sebastian Charquero gave Alianza a 1-0 lead in the 17th but an own-goal three minutes later with a desperate clearance by Christian Ramos allowed Vasco da Gama to equalise shortly after.

Alianza went down to 10 men in the 48th when defender Giancarlo Carmona was sent off and Vasco took full advantage, with defender Dedé scoring in the 59th with a header from a resulting corner for a 2-1 lead. Alecsandro hit the post with a penalty in the 69th, but former Lyon midfielder Juninho Pernambucano clinched the victory with a goal in the 80th.

Walter Fernando Ibáñez scored in the 85th to cut the margin for the Peruvians. Vasco da Gama has three points from two games, while Alianza is yet to earn a point. Libertad of Paraguay leads the group with six points from two matches.

At Montevideo, Uruguay, Peñarol had to settle for a draw despite outplaying Universidad de Chile. Peñarol was the losing finalist a year ago, but this time has only one point from three matches. Atlético Nacional of Colombia leads Group 8 with six points from two matches, two points clear of Universidad de Chile.

Andrés Nicolás Freitas gave Peñarol the lead in the 21st minute, but Junior Fernandes leveled it in the 35th with a 15-yard volley. Peñarol had two clear chances to score 10 minutes into the second half but failed to convert either.

In the final minutes, it was former Uruguay international goalkeeper Fabián Carini to the rescue saving a number of resurgent attacks from the Chilean side. Coach Jorge Sampaoli after the match spoke about his side's missed opportunities that should have been converted for a deserved victory. It was not to be.

Peñarol's hopes of advancing to the knockout phase look to be in serious doubt after failing to grab three points.

At Santiago, Chile, defender Enzo Andía gave Universidad Católica a 1-0 lead with a 38th-minute header but Emanuel Herrera equalized in the final seconds of the first half. Universidad Española leads the group with seven points from three matches, four points clear of Universidad Católica.

Transfer interest in Chile

Despite the closing of the transfer window in Europe, various big clubs across the continent are looking specifically at a number of players with Chilean clubs.

According to Italian football paper Calciomercatonews claim Peruvian forward Raúl Ruidíaz of Universidad de Chile has agreed verbally to a deal with Portuguese giants Benfica.

Ruidíaz is also being monitored by Serie A outfits Udinese and Napoli.

Another target of interest is Paulo Magalhães of Universidad de Chile, who scored a brilliant header last weekend against Cobresal at Wolfsburg in the German Bundesliga. In fact, former Sydney FC boss Pierre Littbarski and current youth scout has expressed his delight on the young footballer.

Littbarski was at hand in Valparaíso at the Playa Ancha stadium last weekend to witness an entertaining and fierce duel between hosts Santiago Wanderers and fallen giants Colo Colo specifically to observe the performances of forwards Carlos Muñoz –of interest for the past season- and local goalscorer Sebastián Ubilla.

With the former World Cup winner present, scout reports do not only include German clubs as talks on Andrés Robles, son of former Wanderers captain and coach Héctor Robles to join Villarreal continue to progress.

Other names grabbing attention from Chilean clubs to European and overseas clubs are Argentinian midfielder Lucas Wilchez of Colo Colo with offers in the Dutch Eredivisie and his teammate, stalwart Esteban Paredes with offers in Argentina and China.

Manchester United have been closely monitoring the talents of young forward Angelo Henríquez of Universidad de Chile along with Chelsea still in the hunt for the signature of young teammate, defender Igor Lichnovsky.

Mexico's "big four" hopes back on track

The traditional hierarchy has been restored in Mexican soccer, at least for one round. In the ninth week of Mexico's Clausura, all four of Mexico's traditional powers – America, Guadalajara, Cruz Azul and Pumas UNAM – posted victories.

The last such occurrence came just over a year ago, in the fifth round of the 2011 Clausura, with 36 rounds, the equivalent of just over a full calendar season, passing since then. Despite the statistical coincidence – one that mostly alludes to the topsy-turvy world of Mexican club football– all four clubs find themselves in distinct predicaments.

Starting at the top of the table, America has shown itself to be a team transformed from the one that crashed to a second-from-bottom finish in the 2011 Apertura. Las Águilas posted their third straight win, a 2-0 result over struggling Jaguares, that saw Daniel Montenegro open the scoring before 20-year-old Luigiani Gallardo sealed the win with his first professional goal in second half stoppage time.

"My team played well, practically, we are changing, the team is still solid," América head coach Miguel Herrera told reporters after the game. "We wanted to score more goals, to see a more explosive team, but we have a very heavy burden from the previous tournament."

Despite the fact that it took his team until the final seconds of the game to well and truly secure the result, Herrera was nonetheless happy with what his team showed and used it as an affirmation of his use of younger players. (Diego Reyes, 19, started his 18th game of the 2011-2012 campaign, while Raúl Jiménez, 20, and Gallardo played important roles off the bench.)

He explained, "[In] the first half we handled the ball very well, we had various chances and afterward we took advantage of the space they gave us, and there is also part of what I talked about previously, which is giving playing time to youngsters."

At the other end of the spectrum, and perhaps even more dependent on its corps of young players is Chivas, a team slowly working its way back after a miserable start to the season that saw it go seven games without winning in the league, not to mention a miserable showing in the Copa Libertadores.

Nonetheless, the team is starting to show flashes of the same ability that saw it finish at the top of the 2011 Apertura standings. This weekend it edged out Puebla to claim a 2-1 victory, its first league away win in six tries since it defeated America 3-1 in October 2011.

While Chivas has retained much of the same group that played so well the previous semester, plummeting confidence after a playoff elimination by unheralded Querétaro played a large part in the disastrous start to this campaign. However, the arrivals of new head coach Ignacio Ambriz and Dutch legend Johan Cruyff as an advisor look to have turned things around.

"I told the players that I did not come to try and reinvent things, they play very good soccer and what I have tried to do is give them confidence," Ambriz explained after the win at Puebla.

Ambriz even said that he believed his team could still qualify for the playoffs, despite having just two wins to its name, further explaining, "I believe that we will achieve [the Liguilla] on the basis of hard work, much humility and at the moment we are on the right path because we have achieved two consecutive victories."

However, he did conclude that there was still plenty of work to be done.

"We still have gaps, so we need to work hard to make this team competitive again and able to fight for something more," Ambriz said.

Indeed, there is a considerable amount of work to be done for Chivas, which sits fourth from bottom with eight points, and has a six-point gap and a crowded field to bridge for the eighth and final Liguilla place.

Sitting in that crowded field are two of Mexico's more perplexing sides, a suddenly threadbare Pumas UNAM outfit in 11th place and championship-starved Cruz Azul in ninth place.

However, both teams were able to snap unflattering winless streaks on the weekend, and are now looking to move up and reaffirm their statuses as two of Mexico's greats.

Pumas, who claimed the 2011 Clausura title, have seen their championship squad ravaged by sales and retirement, and unable to augment it for a single player. In the summer Israel Castro left for Cruz Azul and Leandro Augusto took off for Tijuana, among others, while the team was further affected by the retirement of longtime leader Francisco Palencia at the end of the 2011 calendar year, after Pumas failed to return to the playoffs.

This has forced Pumas to rely increasingly on their vaunted youth system, and while there is no doubting the quality of players that the club has produced over the years, the fact that there is no midfielder or forward in the squad over the age of 25 is reflected in the team's stumbling start to the Clausura.

A 2-0 win over the weekend at a resurgent Toluca was just the team's second win of the season, with an early-season 3-0 win over current leader Morelia belying a string of otherwise mediocre results.

"There have been good games at times, but this could be the best we have done, the team stood well against a great opponent," Pumas head coach Guillermo Vázquez declared after the game.

Testifying to the composition of Pumas' squad and strength of their defense, it was two defenders, Efraín Velarde (age 25) and José Antonio García (age 20), both Pumas youth products, who found the net. Furthermore, Pumas were able to hold an offense led by the red-hot Ivan Alonso and veteran schemer Sinha in check, keeping a clean sheet against one of Mexico's most vaunted attacks.

"Here it doesn't matter who scores the goals, the important thing is that everyone does their work well, the team plays well and at the end if it was the defenders (who scored the goals), it is the same for us, they generated chances," Vázquez explained. "Toluca is a great team and we knew how to contain them."

Vázquez also hopes that instead of the result being an outlier like the win against Morelia, it will serve as a wake-up call for Pumas for the rest of the campaign, commenting, "We are getting started a little late, but this [victory] comes in a good moment, we passed the difficult situations, the team is mentally strong to continue fighting."

Rounding out the success of the "big four" over the weekend was Cruz Azul, victors in a wild 4-3 result against visiting Monterrey. Perhaps just as important as the result, though, was the presence of big winter signing Omar Bravo on the scoresheet.

The veteran forward, who was brought back to Mexico from MLS to bolster Cruz Azul's offense had fount his account conspicuously devoid of goals heading into the ninth round, mirroring his team's similar offensive struggles. However, just as Bravo finally scored, Cruz Azul's attacking options finally hit the target with both Bravo and the team hoping to build from the important win.

The other results in Week 9 of the Clausura were: Estudiantes Tecos 0-2 Tijuana, Querétaro 0-3 Morelia, Tigres UANL 1-0 Atlante, Santos Laguna 5-2 San Luis, and Atlas 0-0 Pachuca.

FIFA confident of 2014 World Cup opener

A senior FIFA official said Tuesday that there was no doubt that the opening game of the 2014 World Cup will take place as planned in São Paulo's Corinthians stadium currently under construction.

"We don't have any doubt that the opening of the World Cup will take place in the Corinthians stadium," Fulvio Danilas, FIFA general manager, told reporters here.

Danilas was part of a joint team of 40 experts from football's world governing FIFA body and Brazil's Local Organizing Committee (LOC) that began a tour of six of the 12 cities that will stage World Cup games: São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Cuiaba, Manaus and Natal.

São Paulo was the team's first stop for a look at progress in the construction of the 65,000-seat Corinthians arena which began last May with a year's delay and should be finished at the end of next year.

The FIFA-led team refused to comment on the row sparked by comments from FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke Friday suggesting that the Brazilian organizers of the 2014 World Cup needed a "kick up the backside."

"I am sorry to say but things are not working in Brazil," Valcke added. "You have to push yourself, kick your arse and just deliver this World Cup and that is what we will do."

His comments drew a sharp rebuke from Brazil, with Sports Minister Aldo Rebelo saying Valcke would not longer be welcome as a FIFA spokesman.

"This is a working visit," Danilas said here.

The FIFA-LOC team members donned white helmets to tour the sprawling construction site, a $463 million dollar project undertaken by Brazil's engineering and construction giant Odebrecht.

"The work is 29 percent complete," Frederico Barbosa, Odebrecht operations manager, told AFP. "The foundations have been laid. The outer structures are up. Everything is going according to plan."

The FIFA experts are monitoring operational planning for the stadiums, including transportation, information technology, security, access for the public and media facilities.

Last September, they inspected the six other Brazilian arenas that will host World Cup games: Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Brasilia (capital city), Porto Alegre, Salvador and Recife.

FIFA has for months expressed varying degrees of concern over the extent to which preparations—renovation or construction of stadiums as well as infrastructure projects—are on track for the first World Cup in Brazil since 1950.

Hodgson rebuilds reputation with Baggies

LONDON CALLING

With Sam Collins in the UK

West Bromwich Albion fans couldn't help themselves. As they left the Hawthorns on Saturday afternoon, talk regarding a few intriguing matters was rife. One of the topics they conversed over was the possibility of their side doing the, seemingly, unthinkable - no, not surviving relegation, that's easy these days for the baggies. Instead, the thesis at hand was 'Can West Brom finish above Liverpool this season?'

Roy Hodgson endured an laborious spell as manager at Anfield. It's conventionally understood that time is a vital commodity in the modern game, and the 64-year old was given very little - six months in fact. Nine defeats in 20 league games, an embarrassing league cup exit to minnows Northampton town and several regrettable signings left Hodgson with his reputation in decline. "I was constantly vilified," protested Hodgson, but the vastly experienced coach was back in management within a month, and is now in the Midlands, where he is adored. And why wouldn't he be? The West Brom coach is on course to lead the club to their best league finish, in the top-flight, in 31 years - when since Ron Atkinson steered the Albion to 4th-place in the 1980/81 campaign. The 1-0 victory over Chelsea at the weekend was the first time those same fans had seen their side claim three points against The Blues in 33 years. West Brom are also set to finish a league season as the highest placed Midlands side - currently above Aston Villa and Wolverhampton Wanderers - for the first time in over three decades. Various positives. Quite frankly, Hodgson can do no wrong right now.

The negative? Hodgson's contract runs out this summer. You can only imagine how West Brom chairman Jeremy Peace feels, the man who decided the Croydon-born coach should start on a 1-and-a-half year deal. How Peace must wish he had loosened his belt, and given the former Fulham coach a long-term contract last February, when Hodgson replace Roberto Di Matteo. Reports on Sunday morning across the media suggested Hodgson is under austere consideration by the FA, with a view to managing the English national team ahead of the European championships in June. Fabio Capello's abrupt exit last month, and caretaker manager Stuart Pearce's admittance that he lacks the "experience" for the role, has increased the possibility of Hodgson leading the nation in Poland and Ukraine. Harry Redknapp remains the likely replacement for Capello, but Hodgson's return to prominence cannot be ignored.

Roy Hodgson's WBA is on course to scale the dizzy heights of the English Premier League.

"The lads want him to stay," West Brom midfielder Chris Brunt affirmed after the Chelsea win, "Look at the work he has done here. I'd like him to stay, but you'll have to ask him." No one has, though contract talks between Hodgson and the club are due to start soon. Albion's technical director Dan Ashworth admitted Hodgson "might not want to go on" for much longer, taking into account his age. A change of manager is something Albion fans have become accustomed to in recent times. Since Argentine legend Ossie Ardiles led the club to promotion to the second division in 1993, a staggering 20 coaches have been at the helm. The fan's support is never in doubt, though. The famous "Boing Boing!" chant, which is sung with regards to the chaotic nature of West Brom's status - five promotions in the last 10 seasons - is hardly heard at the Hawthorns these days however. A testament to Hodgson's brilliant work, in striving off any threat of relegation, with eleven fixtures still to be played.

His purchases whilst at Liverpool, who incidentally sit just four points ahead of West Brom, may have been profoundly scrutinised, but Hodgson's transfer market skills whilst in the 'Black Country' bellow success. Gareth McAuley - who netted the winner against Chelsea and who Brunt labeled the "find" of the season - arrived on a free transfer from Ipswich town last May. Club insiders claim Hodgson wants a bigger transfer budget if he is to stay, though excessive money has been spent by the former Switzerland coach. £6.5m record buy Shane Long, from Championship side Reading, has been a relative success too, helping Hodgson dismiss the conjecture that he isn't astute enough in the market. Ignominious signings such as Joe Cole, Christian Poulsen and Paul Konchesky whilst at Liverpool, or Kevin Davies, whilst at Blackburn prior to the new millennium, brought about that notion.

He hasn't won much silverware throughout his 40-year managerial career, with his only trophy successes coming in Scandinavia, but Hodgson is still admired by many. Inter Milan owner, Massimo Moratti, insists that Hodgson "saved" his club during the mid-nineties, when the Italian giants were struggling, whilst fans at Craven Cottage, the home of Fulham, persist that he is called 'Sir Roy' for his three-year stint down by the Thames.

Hodgson is admirably rebuilding his career at West Bromwich Albion, and a finish above Liverpool in the Premier League this season will only increase that growing reputation.

Arsenal fall short; Messi magic; APOEL dreams on

UCL Wrap

Matthew Galea

Arsenal 3-0 AC Milan

Arsenal came within a goal of producing an incredible Champions League comeback on Tuesday but fell just short by beating AC Milan 3-0.

After losing the first leg of their round-of-16 clash 4-0 at San Siro on February 15, Arsenal needed a miracle at the Emirates Stadium, but first half goals from Laurent Koscielny, Tomas Rosicky and Robin van Persie had them within sight of a stunning upset.

Milan regrouped at the interval, however, and managed to hold out to secure a 4-3 aggregate victory and book their place in the last eight.

Banfica 2 -0 Zenit St Petersburg

Benfica progressed to the last eight of the Champions League 4-3 on aggregate, thanks to a 2-0 win over Zenit St Petersburg on Tuesday.

After losing the first leg 3-2 in St Petersburg on February 15, a goal from Maxi Pereira moments before half-time and another from Nelson Oliveira in second-half injury time saw Jorge Jesus' men run out comfortable winners in the round-of-16 second leg at Estadio da Luz.

Barcelona 7-1 Lerekusen

Lionel Messi scored a record five goals to help Barcelona past Bayer Leverkusen 7-1 in their Champions League clash on Wednesday.

The Catalan giants sealed a 10-2 aggregate victory to advance into the quarter-finals of the European competition, with Champions League debutant Cristian Tello adding a brace to Messi's brilliant tally.

Leverkusen's fortunes eventually turned on 25 minutes, when Messi latched onto Xavi's chipped ball before lifting his finish over Leno and into the net with relative ease.

In the 42nd minute, Messi had time and space to fire an unstoppable finish into the lower-left corner, doubling the hosts' advantage and putting the tie beyond any doubt before half-time.

Five minutes after the break, Messi completed his hat-trick with another phenomenal finish. After receiving Fabregas' ball over the top, the 24-year-old created just enough space to shoot, and again chipped his finish, leaving Leno with no chance.

The Argentine's tally was the greatest-ever for a player in Europe's elite competition, and raised his count to 48 goals in 42 games.

Leverkusen would get a strike at the death as Karim Bellarabi played a 1-2 with Simon Rolfes before striking a hard finish to the far post, but it was little consolation for Leverkusen, whose defeat equalled the worst-ever result for a team in one leg in the round-of-16.

APOEL continue to play David and Goliath in the UCL after beating Lyon on penalties, whilst Lionel Messi was in seventh heaven with Barcelona.

APOEL 1-0 Lyon

APOEL Nicosia's dream Champions League run continued after they defeated Lyon 4-3 on penalties in Cyprus on Wednesday.

The hosts won 1-0 in 90 minutes to level the tie 1-1, before extra-time ended goalless, sending the contest to spot-kicks.

The Cypriot outfit advanced 4-3 in the shootout, with Michel Bastos' spot kick saved by APOEL goalkeeper Dionisis Chiotis, sending the underdogs through to the quarter-final stage.

It was the Cypriots who scored the only goal of the match after seven minutes when Gustavo Manduca - who was dismissed later in extra-time - sent the packed home support into raptures.

Ivan Jovanovic's side were not merely defensive spectators after scoring, but it was the visiting Lyon who did much of the pressing for the remainder for no result.

Once more chances were limited, with neither side over-committing forward, though it was the French side that offered the greater threat as their hosts tired.

APOEL's defensive mindset contributed to Manduca picking up a second yellow card with 115 minutes on the clock.

Even without their talisman, APOEL were so buoyant they progressed to the quarter-finals, with Bastos missing the decisive kick for Lyon after the home side hit the back of the net with each of their four penalties to send the crowd into hysterics.

Champions League

Round of 16 – Week 2 Results
Benfica 2-0 Zenit
(Benfica wins 4-3 on Agg)

Arsenal 3-0 AC Milan
(AC wins 4-3 on Agg)

APOEL 1-0 Lyon
(APOEL wins 4-3 on penalties after 1-1 on Agg)

Barcelona 7-1 Leverkusen
(Barcelona wins 10-2 on Agg)

Round of 16 – Week 1 Results
Napoli 3 – 1 Chelsea
CSKA Moscow 1 – 1 Real Madrid
FC Basel 1 – 0 FC Bayern Munich
Marseille 1 – 0 Inter Milan

EPL Wrap

Steven Talevski

Chelsea split with AVB

Chelsea have split ways with Manager Andre Villas-Boas after the clubs shock one nil defeat away to West Bromwich Albion saw them drop three points below fourth placed Arsenal on the Premier League table.

Gareth McAuley's 82nd minute strike for West Bromwich saw Andre Villas-Boas end his nine month reign as Chelsea manager.

Boas had struggled to find a consistent winning formula amongst a number of injuries and calls by sections of fans and the media to rebuild the Chelsea squad.

Arsenal Manager Arsene Wenger said the young manager needed more time to prove himself at Chelsea.

"When you are not given time, you have no chance," Wenger told Sky Sports News.

"It is sad every time a manager loses his job, because it is a job that demands full commitment. I think he [Villas-Boas] did that.

"I'm sorry that he was not given enough time to do his job."

Former West Bromwich Albion manager, and now Chelsea assistant, Roberto Di Matteo will take control of the team on an interim basis until the end of the season.

Di Matteo began the role earlier this week as Chelsea comfortably defeated Birmingham to ensure a spot in the last eight of the FA Cup.

Di Matteo will be the seventh Manager in control of Chelsea after Jose Mourinho left the club in September 2007.

Chelsea released the news on a statement on its website stating that results were not good enough.

"Unfortunately the results and performances of the team have not been good enough and were showing no signs of improving at a key time in the season,"

The statement said.

Chelsea now lay in fifth position on the table, three points below fourth placed Arsenal who had a terrific come from behind victory of Liverpool at Anfield.

Liverpool could have gone one up early as Luis Suarez won a penalty that saw Dirk Kuyt step up for Liverpool in the 18th minute only to see Wojchiech Szczesny made a wonderful penalty save.

Match of the Day: Arsenal take on Newcastle United in the quest for the lucrative 4th spot.

However Liverpool only took another five minutes to take the one nil lead when Laurant Koscienly conceded an unfortunate own goal.

The lead was short lived with Robin van Persie scoring a header in the 31st minute before he scored a stunning late goal in second half injury time to hand the Gunners a 2-1 victory.

The loss leaves Liverpool in seventh position, ten points below Arsenal who currently hold the last of the coveted European Champions League spots.

Newcastle United, who are one spot above Liverpool in sixth position, also fell further below Liverpool as they could only manage a dramatic one all draw in the Tyne-Wear derby.

Newcastle went down one nil early courtesy of a Nicklas Bendtner penalty in the 25th minute before substitute and a Toon Army favourite Shola Ameobi scored a 91st minute strike to earn Newcastle a dramatic point as the striker took his tally to seven goals in 12 games against Sunderland.

Meanwhile the race for the Premier League title intensified as Manchester United pick up a crucial three points away to Tottenham.

Goals from Wayne Rooney and a double from Ashley Young earned United a 3-1 victory at White Hart Lane as Jermaine Defoe scored a late conciliation goal for the home side.

Although disappointed with his side's first half, Manager Sir Alex Ferguson said the win proved his side well up for the title challenge.

"[Tottenham] was a bit of a disappointment, but the one thing we did do was show the determination to get the result," Ferguson said.

"Things can happen - you can drop some surprise points and I think both teams will do that. The important thing to do is not drop as many as your opponents.

"We've got the experience. We won't get nervous, we're enjoying it.

"And the battling performance you saw against a very good Tottenham team tells you we're up for it."

Manchester United now remains two points below Manchester City who picked up a two nil victory of relegation zone strugglers Bolton.

Bolton remain second last on the table equal on points with bottom placed Wigan who also suffered a two nil loss at home to Swansea.

Rounding off the relegation zone are Wolverhampton Wolves who were smashed five nil by Fulham allowing Blackburn to move out of the dreaded bottom three with a one all draw with Aston Villa.

Queens Park Rangers also remain out of the bottom three on goal difference after they draw one all at home against Everton.

In the only other Premier League match this weekend Stoke City defeated Norwich City one nil to overtake them on the table.

EPL PREVIEW

After a series of Champions League, Europa League and FA Cup replay matches mid-week the Premier League returns this weekend as clubs look to improve their positions on the table with only three months of football left this season.

The weekend kicks off with a battle between two relegation threatened sides taking battle at the Reebok Stadium as Bolton face Queens Park Rangers with a loss for either club possibly leaving them on the bottom of the Premier League table.

Blackburn and Wolverhampton who lay in 17th and 18th position on the table will also lock horns at the Molineux Stadium in what could prove to be an important game this season.

Wigan, who are the only other side in the bottom five face the impressive Norwich City at Carrow Road.

The battle on top of the Premier League table will continue this weekend as both Manchester sides play simultaneously on Sunday.

Manchester City will look for their fifth straight win in the Premier League when they travel to the Liberty Stadium to face Swansea City while Manchester United hosts West Bromwich Albion at Old Trafford who is coming off a fantastic one nil victory over Chelsea.

Third placed Tottenham are 13 points below Manchester City and look to be out of the title hunt travel to Goodison Park to face Everton.

Arsenal will look to remain in the final Champions League spot this weekend when they host Newcastle in a Monday night fixture.

Chelsea, under interim manager Roberto Di Matteo will look to keep their fourth spot aspirations high when they host Stoke City while Liverpool hope to do the same with their slime fourth place chances when they visit Sunderland.

FIRST ROUND OF FFV STATE KNOCKOUT CUP THIS SATURDAY

The State Knockout Cup is a knockout football tournament contested by Victorian senior men's teams. Over 100 teams from around Victoria will take part in the cup, and will all be vying for cup glory, plus the $30,000 prize money for the winner. The cup will run in a similar format to last year with all teams split into separate zones in the early rounds to cut down on travel. When two teams from each zone remain clubs will then be able to be drawn against anyone else in the state. Victorian Premier League and State League One teams will enter the competition in Round Four which will commence on 28 April. Also, due to differing numbers of teams in each zone, several teams have a bye until Round Two.

Round One Fixtures:

2:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Old Carey SC v Nunawading City
Knox Regional Football Centre - Pitch 1
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Surf Coast FC v Sebastopol Vikings
Banyul Warri Reserve
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Nth Sunshine Eagles v Brimbank
Club Italia Sporting Club - Pitch 1
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Skye United FC v Mornington SC
Dallas Brooks Park - Pitch 1
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Corio SC v Ballarat Red Devils SC
Hume Reserve - Pitch 1
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Berwick City SC v Sandown Lions FC
Jack Thomas Reserve
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Williamstown SC v Melton Phoenix
MacPherson Park
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Westvale SC v Cairnlea FC
McKechnie Reserve - Pitch 2
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Parkmore SC v Springvale City SC
Parkmore Soccer Club
3:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Doncaster Rovers v Old Scotch
White Eagles Stadium - Serbian
Sports Centre - Pitch 1
4:30 PM Sat 10/Mar
Ashburton Utd v Whitehorse Utd
Knox Regional Football Centre - Pitch 1
4:30 PM Sat 10/Mar
Middle Park FC v Elwood City SC
State Football Centre - Pitch 3
5:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Old Trinity v Manningham United
State Football Centre - Pitch 1
5:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Malvern City FC v Melbourne Tornado
State Football Centre - Pitch 2
7:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Eltham Redbacks FC v Box Hill Utd
Clifton Park
7:00 PM Sat 10/Mar
Collingwood City v Albert Park SC
State Football Centre - Pitch 3
7:30 PM Sat 10/Mar
Old Melburnians v Melb University
State Football Centre - Pitch 2

Northcote City took out top honours in the Cup last season.

Roman's Empire Loses Patience (Again)

London Eye

Eddie Gray

After 40 games and a win ratio of 47.5%, Roman Abramovich and Chelsea FC decide to do what they do best and rid of Portuguese tactician Andre Villas Boas. Or as everyone else endearingly knows him, 'AVB'.

The whole deal has cost the Chelsea owner in the region of £36m. £10m paying off previous manager Carlo Ancelotti, £13m compensation given to Porto so they could buy out Villas Boas' contract and finally, £13m to pay off the rest of his 3 year contract at Chelsea, of which he was only 36 weeks into.

The arrival of the former Porto manager last summer was seen as the second coming, the second 'special one', the new Mourinho. In the end it was these comparisons that led to his unfortunate downfall. Constantly being compared to Jose Mourinho or any other manager from a previous regime is never an easy way to start your career. For Villas Boas, 33 years old when he took the job, it was just one of the many downfalls of his ill-fated time at Stamford Bridge.

What's worrying for Chelsea fans is that no one is surprised, in fact, it's more surprising he's lasted this long under Abramovich. Out of the title race before Christmas and some abject displays in all competitions led to Villas Boas having the worst win ratio of all managers since Abramovich purchased the club.

AVB has been relieved of his Stamford Bridge misery. Blues fans have also been relieved...

Talk of a rift between the manager and senior players constantly arose throughout the season, which even prompted a ridiculous story from a popular British red top that Villas Boas wanted the players to celebrate their goals with the bench to show the unity in the team. A story which was of course denied by Villas Boas. Aside from that, there was clearly a distinct lack of unity between the players which we were so used to not only under Mourinho, but under Ancelotti and Avram Grant.

Performances on the pitch were unbelievably bad and lacked any kind of tactical awareness and passion. Only Chelsea's new signing Gary Cahill can be forgiven, and his reaction to Napoli's third goal in the Champions League showed exactly what he felt about the team he had joined.

Villas Boas was there to make changes, with players such as Frank Lampard 33, Didier Drogba 33 and Florent Malouda 31 finding themselves appearing on the bench more than they're accustom to. Nicolas Anelka 32 and Brazilian defender Alex 29 were transfer listed after both appeared to have a fall out with the manager. The likes of Juan Mata and Daniel Sturridge were supposed to be the poster boys of a new era at Stamford Bridge and have arguably been the two best players for Chelsea so far this season.

It's unfair to say that a professional footballer would not perform to the best of his ability, but it was obvious that things on the pitch weren't right.

There is no questioning his tactical nous or knowledge of the game, but his experience to take a job on like the one at Chelsea may have been lacking.

His achievements at Porto coincided with the way he made them play. Magnificent to watch, he won the Portuguese Primeira Liga, the Portuguese Cup and the Europa League in his first year at the club. The youngest manger to win a European competition.

Compared to the pressures of the Premiership, especially at a club like Chelsea is something that may have come too soon for Villas Boas. Keeping players like John Terry, Ashley Cole, Lampard and Drogba happy is slightly different to keeping someone who calls himself 'Hulk' on your side. Of course, no disrespect to Mr Hulk.

All of the blame can not be pushed onto the players though and Villas Boas did make mistakes.

Buying an £18m striker in Roman Lukaku and not starting him in a single Premiership match is strange. Seen as one for the future, it was made clear he wasn't going to be an instant starter, but with Drogba at the African Cup Of Nations in January and Fernando Torres without a goal since October, the former Anderlecht player was surely worth a run in the side.

The post match interviews he gave were also becoming increasingly soul destroying. Blaming himself for his tactics and preparation at first was commendable, but after the same excuse came out after each poor performance, he sounded desperate instead of valiant in defeat.

In the mean time, Chelsea have put former fans favourite and assistant manager Roberto Di Matteo in charge for the rest of the season. Why Abramovich couldn't have let Villas Boas try and redeem himself up until the end of the season is a frustrating, and it's hard to see what more Di Matteo can bring to a squad so low on confidence in such a short space of time.

Three managers already have the pleasure of being linked with the job full time, including Rafa Benitez, Pep Guardiola and the original 'special one' Mourinho.

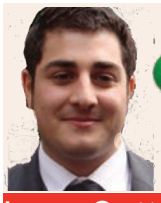
Mourinho was previously sacked by Abramovich as he didn't enjoy the way they played under him. I think he'll be in for a shock if Benitez takes over. A fantastic European record will impress the Chelsea owner, but a manager who allows the opposition time on the ball and likes to wait for them to make a mistake is not easy on the eye. Along with his love of zonal marking from set pieces, it could be another expensive disaster in the making.

Guardiola would be Abramovich's first choice. After putting together arguably one of the best footballing sides ever, certainly of this generation, his Barcelona side is something the Russian owner can only dream of emulating. Abramovich is infatuated with the way Barcelona as a club is run, and to bring a piece of that puzzle over to Stamford Bridge would be a big step forward in taking Chelsea to the heights he wants to.

Seen house hunting in London recently, Mourinho's return to England and West London would be the fans choice. Chelsea at the moment are not getting a Champions League spot next season, aren't even in touching distance of Manchester United or Manchester City and will finish the season with no silverware. One thing that Mourinho will guarantee is a trophy and after not being able to win the Champions League with Chelsea in his previous time as coach may tempt the Real Madrid coach back to the club where he is worshipped.

As for Villas Boas, and what will be a massive blow to his confidence after experiencing such success at Porto, his most likely destination is Italy with Inter Milan. Known fans of 'AVB', Inter currently have Claudio Ranieri in charge until the end of the season, when he will leave his post after an indifferent season for the 2010-2011 Serie A runners up.

Villas Boas is certain to become a successful coach at a top club in Europe. Given time he would have turned Chelsea into title contenders, but if there's one thing Abramovich doesn't appear to have, then it's time.



SERIE A 2011 - 2012

Luca **Cetta**

Lazio the Kings of Rome

Lazio overcame ten-man Roma in a typically fiery Rome Derby, whilst a first-half Zlatan Ibrahimovic hat-trick propelled Milan to victory in Palermo. Juventus slipped-up twice and Inter's losing streak was barely ended.

Lazio were looking to put a difficult few weeks behind them and win in a Roma hosted Derby for the first time since 1998 to complete a season sweep, whilst Francesco Totti returned from suspension for the Giallorossi.

The designated away side were off to the perfect start on seven minutes when Miroslav Klose burst through the Roma defence and was brought down by Marteen Stekelenburg. The Dutch custodian was shown a red card and Hernanes dispatched the resulting spot-kick. Roma battled bravely despite their disadvantage and Fabio Borini continued his rich vein of scoring form to put Roma back on level terms.

Stefano Mauri reached a floated Cristian Ledesma free-kick at the back post to steer Lazio into a 2-1 lead, one they did not then relinquish. Lionel Scaloni was sent off as both sides ended with ten men. The match-winner later said: "I am so happy at scoring my first goal in a derby, but above all for the team and the fans. We lost too many (five in a row) and winning two in the same season is fantastic."

Daniele De Rossi failed to place blame on the referee for the red card incident, claiming Roma's own errors cost them, whilst there was an unsavoury incident as Juan was racially abused by Lazio supporters. The club was later fined €20,000.

Lazio took sole possession of 3rd place with the Rome derby win.

Milan were still seething from the Juventus clash as they travelled to Palermo and Ibrahimovic ensured they remained first for another week with a wonderful hat-trick in 15 minutes. Thiago Silva added a fourth after the break to complete the rout. Palermo boss Bortolo Mutti noted his side made 'stupid' mistakes as the Rossoneri moved three points clear of Juve after the Turin giants were held at home.

The Bianconeri were looking to respond to Milan when they faced Chievo and started in the right fashion as Paolo De Ceglie scored for the first time since 2006 following an Andrea Pirlo freekick. However, Juve took their foot off the pedal and Chievo clawed their way back into the match, finding the equaliser through Boukary Drame with 15 minutes remaining.

Inter ended their losing streak – only just - by coming from two goals down at home and through a loud chorus of boos to draw with Catania. Alejandro Gomez and Mariano Izco gave the visitors a half-time lead, but the two Diego's - Forlan and Milito - responded in the last 20 minutes to rescue a point.

Napoli were fortunate in claiming a 2-1 win at Parma. Edinson Cavani gave the visitors the lead, following up from his own saved penalty to knock in the rebound. Parma equalised with just over ten minutes remaining, but Ezequiel Lavezzi then scored from an offside position to secure the points.

Udinese dropped valuable points at home in a 0-0 draw with Atalanta despite dominating, whilst Fiorentina returned to the winners list against Cesena. Bologna squeezed past Novara with a late goal, as Lecce were denied a third-straight win by an unfortunate deflection, drawing 2-2 versus Genoa. Finally, Siena thumped Cagliari 3-0.

Three rescheduled matches were played on Wednesday. Bologna held Juventus to a third consecutive 1-1 draw as both Leonardo Bonucci and Antonio Conte were sent off during the second half. Fiorentina looked to have overcome their poor away form at Parma, but lost the lead to a late Sebastian Giovinco penalty to draw 2-2, while Cesena versus Catania finished goalless.

Following their lean spell, Juve will be aiming for a return to the winners list. They travel to Genoa, who tend to excel at home but have dropped points in their last two clashes at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris. Juve will be forced to field a makeshift central defensive pairing with Giorgio Chiellini, Andrea Barzagli and Bonucci all unavailable.

Milan host Lecce, the southern club unbeaten in five matches but without a win on their last seven trips north. The Rossoneri claimed an incredible 4-3 win in Lecce earlier in the season after trailing by three goals at half-time and warmed up for this clash with a dramatic loss in the Champions League, but still managing to qualify by the skin of their teeth against Arsenal.

In the battle for third, both Lazio and Napoli are at home, whilst Udinese are on the road at Novara. Lazio will be buoyed by their Derby triumph that has seen them take sole possession of third position and are boosted by the return of Tomasso Rocchi from injury. Napoli will have one eye on their Champions League contest with Chelsea and will be without Coach Walter Mazzarri on the sidelines following his dismissal in Parma as Cagliari aim to snap a three-match winless streak. Meanwhile, Udinese will be favourites to overcome certain relegation candidates Novara, who sacked Coach Emiliano Mondonico on Wednesday and brought back Attilio Tesser.

Stubborn Chievo will host Inter, also looking ahead to a midweek Champions League second leg encounter, but in desperate need of a confidence boost before attempting to turn around the tie with Marseille. Roma have lost consecutive matches and need to beat Palermo in Sicily to keep faint Champions League hopes alive.

Elsewhere, Catania host a Stevan Jovetic-less Fiorentina, whilst Siena will be looking to move away from the relegation zone away at Cesena, something Parma will also aim to achieve when they travel to Bergamo to face Atalanta.

Real Madrid and Barcelona Coaches Coming or Going?

Pepe **Lopez**

Where exactly current Real Madrid and Barcelona coaches Jose Mourinho and Pep Guardiola will coach next season has become the talk of Spanish Football, as the manager's of the world's biggest football clubs continue to be linked with moves to the English Premier League.

Jose Mourinho is a 6-4 odds on favorite to return to coach troubled Chelsea FC, whilst Guardiola is rated 6-1 chance to be coach of the same club. Whilst Guardiola has openly joked about the possibility of a move to London; "Yes, yes, sure, I speak to Chelsea every day."

Mourinho is said to have been spotted in London with the purpose of purchasing a house in the past week.

Pep Guardiola later had this to say of Andre Villas-Boas departure from Chelsea FC, "He's a fantastic coach, but results are the most important thing in football." Guardiola is currently stalling in negotiations to sign a new contract at Barcelona FC, and is no doubt taking his time to decide his next career move. Meanwhile, Jose Mourinho did not deny that he was in London recently, in fact he made this public statement in regards to the news; "I don't have to give explanations to anyone concerning my private life. When one of us leaves Madrid, we inform the club out of courtesy. I informed them. And on Monday I am going away again."

Ironically, the two coaches might not just be fighting each other for titles in Spain and Europe, they might just be fighting each other for their next contract.

Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich took over the Chelsea FC in 2003, and after the then coach Claudio Ranieri was unable to deliver any immediate success, Abramovich signed Jose Mourinho. During Mourinho's time as Chelsea coach, Chelsea became only the fifth English team to win back-to-back league championships since WW2. In 2007 Mourinho fell out with Chelsea FC owner Abramovich and was replaced by Avram Grant, who was fired days after Chelsea lost the Champions League Final to Manchester United. Next up was Brazilian World Cup winning coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who spent only seven months in the job before getting the sack after poor results. Guus Hiddink was appointed as a caretaker before former AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti took over. Andre Villas-Boas was signed after an impressive season at Porto, where he lead his team to the Europa League and Portuguese domestic success.

Whilst Jose Mourinho and Guus Hiddink departed on their own accord, unlike the other 4 coaches who were sacked by Abramovich, Guus has recently taken up a new a position as Coach of FC Anzhi Makhachkala, who are owned by another Russian Billionaire, Suleyman Kerimov, leaving Mourinho as the clear favorite to be Chelsea FC's coach in the 2012-2013 season.

In other news, the Spanish Cup Final is set to be hosted by Atletico Madrid's Vicente Calderon. Atletico put their hand up to host the final, after Real Madrid withdrew their proposal to host the final, after arch rivals Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona FC both qualified for the event. Whilst Real Madrid have declared "maintenance" as their reason for no longer wanting to host the match, Bilbao Inaki Azkuna mayor had this to say; "It is shameful that because they are repairing some bathrooms or something they will not host the match. There must be something more to it that I do not know about."

Alex **Milic**

Serbia

The Serbian SuperLiga finally resumed over the weekend following a two month Winter break. League leaders Partizan kicked off Round 16 with a visit to Novi Pazar.

This was new Managers Avram Grant's first competitive match in charge and it was one to forget as the 'Black and Whites' dropped two points in a 1:1 draw, they in fact had to come from behind to snatch a point. The match was watched by 9,000 fans in a hostile atmosphere.

Red Star took full advantage edging out Spartak Subotica with a second half goal from Brazilian Evandro giving the 'Red and Whites' three valuable points and cutting the gap at the top to eight points. The match was watched by 41,000 plus fans at the 'Marakana' which was the seventh most attended match in Europe over the weekend. The fans definitely helped the club in getting the three points but Prosinecki says they put well needed pressure on their youngsters to perform and it is a valuable learning curve for their new signings just to know at what a big club they are at.

Vojvodina failed to perform in a goalless draw against Radnicki Kragujevac in front of 10,000 fans which saw former Ghana and Fenerbahce captain Stephan Appiah make his debut for the Novi Sad club.

Serbia played two friendly matches in Cyprus where they took on the home side and Armenia. They defeated the Armenians 2:0 and played a goalless match against Cyprus. The two friendlies saw five players make their debuts – Matija Nastasic(Fiorentina), Lazar Markovic (Partizan), Aleksandar Ignjanovski (Werder), Dusan Tadic (Groningen) and Filip Djuricic (Heerenveen). It was also the first time Dusan Basta (Udinese) put on the red of Serbia having last played for the national team of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006.

All of these players have been in fantastic form for their club sides and it was a well needed change for the Serbia side which failed to qualify for the Euros. They will take on World and European Champions Spain in a friendly and will also test out France and Sweden ahead of their European Championships campaigns.

Serbian Manager of the Year Ivan Jovanovic has taken his side APOEL to the Quarter Finals of the UEFA Champions League following a penalty shoot-out win over French side Lyon. This is the biggest achievement in Cypriot football history.

Milan Bisevic has been starring for Paris St Germain

Croatia

Dinamo Zagreb remains eight points clear at the top of the Croatian Prva Liga. They defeated Osijek in a derby match 1:0 with a goal from Bosnian International Alispahic separating the two sides. Hajduk Split overcame NK Zagreb on the road in a six goal thriller, winning 4:2. Sharbini grabbed two, new/old signing Gabric found the net and striker Vukusic sealed the win for the second placed side while Abdurahimi and Sovcic scored for the home side. Slaven defeated Inter to move into third place while RNK Split slipped to fourth on the table following a draw with relegation battlers Lucko.

Dinamo Zagreb has reached the Semi-Finals of the Croatian Cup following a penalty shoot-out win over division two side Istra.

Greece

Olympiakos defeated OFI Crete 2:0 to return to the top of the table as Panathinaikos lost at home in the derby match of the round to Paok. Holebas and Kazim Kazim gave the 'Red and Whites' the three points in Crete. A Lino penalty and a late strike from national team player Salpangidis gave the 'black and whites' a vital win over Panathinaikos in Athens. This week Olympiakos welcomes Aris while AEK takes on Panathinaikos in the derby match of the round.

Turkey

Galatasaray has a nine point lead at the top of the Turkish League as both Gala and Fenerbahce won. The league leaders put four past Sivasspor on the road with goals to Ujfalusi, Yilmaz and a double from Necati. Fener thrashed Genclebirigli 6:1 with goals to Sow, Emre, Alex, Dia and a fantastic double from Stoch keeping the side in the run. Trabzonspor defeated Besiktas 2:1 away in the derby match of the round and is now level on points with the 'Black and Whites' as goals from Burak and Colman cancelled out Hugo Almeida's opener. This week Fenerbahce makes the trip to the nations capital to take on Ankaragucu, Galatasaray takes on Genclebirigli.

James Troisi's Kayserispor is currently 12th seven points off fifth place, they take on Istanbul this week. Troisi has been a key figure for the Turkish side and his fine form was rewarded with a call up to the Socceroos squad that took on Saudi Arabia with Troisi playing 90minutes in the 4:2 win.

ENGLAND EPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Manchester City	27	21	3	3	69	19	+50	66	W W W W L
2 Manchester United	27	20	4	3	66	27	+39	64	W W W D W
3 Tottenham Hotspur	27	16	5	6	52	33	+19	53	L L W D W
4 Arsenal	27	15	4	8	55	38	+17	49	W W W W D
5 Chelsea	27	13	7	7	47	32	+15	46	L W L D D
6 Newcastle United	27	12	8	7	39	39	+0	44	D D L W W
7 Liverpool	26	10	9	7	30	25	+5	39	L L D W L
8 Fulham	27	9	9	9	37	36	+1	36	W W W L D
9 Stoke City	27	10	6	11	27	38	-11	36	W W L L L
10 West Bromwich …	27	10	5	12	34	35	-1	35	W W W L D
11 Norwich City	27	9	8	10	38	44	-6	35	L L W W L
12 Sunderland	27	9	7	11	35	31	+4	34	D L L W W
13 Everton	26	9	7	10	27	28	-1	34	D W D W D
14 Swansea City	27	8	9	10	30	34	-4	33	W L L W D
15 Aston Villa	27	6	12	9	30	35	-5	30	D D L L D
16 Queens Park Ra…	27	5	7	15	28	46	-18	22	D L L L D
17 Blackburn Rovers	27	5	7	15	38	60	-22	22	D L W L L
18 Wolverhampton …	27	5	7	15	30	56	-26	22	L D L W L
19 Bolton Wanderers	27	6	2	19	29	56	-27	20	L L L L D
20 Wigan Athletic	27	4	8	15	23	52	-29	20	L D W D L

SPAIN La Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Real Madrid	25	22	1	2	85	21	+64	67	W W W W W
2 Barcelona	25	17	6	2	73	19	+54	57	W W W L W
3 Valencia	25	12	7	6	38	29	+9	43	W L L W D
4 Levante	25	11	5	9	37	36	+1	38	W W L L D
5 Athletic Club	25	9	10	6	41	32	+9	37	W D W L D
6 Málaga	25	11	4	10	36	37	-1	37	W W L W L
7 Osasuna	25	8	11	6	29	39	-10	35	D W L W D
8 Rayo Vallecano	25	10	4	11	36	38	-2	34	W L W W W
9 Atlético Madrid	25	8	9	8	34	31	+3	33	D L D D D
10 Sevilla	25	8	9	8	27	28	-1	33	D W W L L
11 Espanyol	25	9	6	10	27	34	-7	33	L L D L D
12 Real Betis	25	9	3	13	29	35	-6	30	L D W W L
13 Real Sociedad	25	8	6	11	27	36	-9	30	L W L W L
14 Mallorca	25	7	8	10	24	30	-6	29	D L W L W
15 Getafe	25	7	8	10	25	34	-9	29	L D D L L
16 Granada	25	8	4	13	22	35	-13	28	L L W L W
17 Villarreal	25	6	9	10	26	38	-12	27	L D L W W
18 Racing Santander	25	4	12	9	21	35	-14	24	L D L D D
19 Sporting Gijón	25	5	6	14	23	48	-25	21	L D D L D
20 Real Zaragoza	25	4	6	15	21	46	-25	18	W L L W L

ITALY Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Milan	26	16	6	4	53	22	+31	54	W D W W D
2 Juventus	26	13	13	0	39	17	+22	52	D D D W D
3 Lazio	26	14	6	6	41	30	+11	48	W W L W L
4 Udinese	26	13	7	6	37	23	+14	46	D W D L L
5 Napoli	26	11	10	5	44	25	+19	43	W W W W D
6 Roma	26	11	5	10	39	33	+6	38	L L W L D
7 Internazionale	26	11	4	11	36	36	+0	37	D L L L L
8 Catania	26	8	11	7	34	35	-1	35	D D W W L
9 Palermo	26	10	4	12	39	43	-4	34	L L W L W
10 Chievo	26	9	7	10	22	31	-9	34	D W W L L
11 Atalanta	26	9	11	6	30	28	+2	32	D W D W D
12 Fiorentina	26	8	8	10	27	27	+0	32	D W L L L
13 Bologna	26	8	8	10	26	30	-4	32	D W L W W
14 Genoa	26	9	5	12	35	48	-13	32	D D L L L
15 Cagliari	26	7	10	9	23	29	-6	31	L L D W D
16 Parma	26	7	9	10	32	41	-9	30	D L D L D
17 Siena	26	7	8	11	30	28	+2	29	W W L L W
18 Lecce	26	6	7	13	30	42	-12	25	D W W D D
19 Cesena	26	4	5	17	16	40	-24	17	D L L L L
20 Novara	26	3	8	15	21	46	-25	17	L L D W D

GERMANY Bundesliga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Borussia Dortmund	24	17	4	3	52	16	+36	55	W W W W W
2 Bayern München	24	15	3	6	51	16	+35	48	L W D W D
3 Borussia M'gla…	24	14	5	5	37	15	+22	47	L D W W D
4 Schalke 04	24	14	2	8	51	32	+19	44	L L W L D
5 Bayer Leverkusen	24	11	7	6	36	29	+7	40	W W W L D
6 Werder Bremen	24	10	6	8	37	38	-1	36	L L W D D
7 Hannover 96	24	8	11	5	30	32	-2	35	D L W D W
8 Stuttgart	24	9	5	10	41	33	+8	32	W W L W D
9 Nürnberg	24	9	4	11	23	32	-9	31	W W W D L
10 Hoffenheim	24	7	9	8	27	28	-1	30	D W D D D
11 Wolfsburg	24	8	4	12	28	44	-16	28	D L L W D
12 Mainz 05	24	6	9	9	35	38	-3	27	L W D D D
13 Hamburger SV	24	6	9	9	28	42	-14	27	L D L W D
14 Köln	24	7	4	13	31	46	-15	25	D L L L W
15 Hertha BSC	24	5	8	11	26	40	-14	23	W L L L L
16 Augsburg	24	4	10	10	25	39	-14	22	D W L D D
17 Freiburg	24	5	6	13	30	52	-22	21	W L D L D
18 Kaiserslautern	24	3	10	11	16	32	-16	19	D L L L L

HOLLAND Eredivisie

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 AZ	24	15	4	5	51	25	+26	49	W D L W W
2 Twente	23	14	6	3	65	25	+40	48	W W W L W
3 PSV	24	14	6	4	62	34	+28	48	L W L W D
4 Ajax	24	13	7	4	63	33	+30	46	W W W W L
5 Heerenveen	24	12	9	3	52	34	+18	45	D D W W W
6 Feyenoord	24	13	5	6	48	31	+17	44	W L D W W
7 Vitesse	24	10	5	9	29	28	+1	35	W L L L W
8 Groningen	24	9	5	10	35	43	-8	32	L L W L L
9 RKC Waalwijk	24	9	4	11	27	35	-8	31	W W D L W
10 Roda JC	24	10	1	13	40	53	-13	31	L L L W L
11 Heracles	24	8	6	10	39	37	+2	30	L L W W D
12 NEC	24	8	3	13	25	34	-9	27	D W L L L
13 Utrecht	24	6	8	10	35	40	-5	26	D L W D W
14 NAC Breda	24	7	4	13	30	38	-8	25	L W L L L
15 ADO Den Haag	24	6	7	11	27	48	-21	25	D L D D L
16 VVV	24	7	4	13	30	53	-23	25	W W W W L
17 De Graafschap	23	4	4	15	21	52	-31	16	L W L L D
18 Excelsior	24	3	6	15	17	53	-36	15	L L D L W

SCOTLAND SPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Celtic	30	24	3	3	62	17	+45	75	D W W W W
2 Rangers	29	20	4	5	56	19	+37	54	L W L W W
3 Motherwell	29	15	6	8	40	33	+7	51	W L W W D
4 Dundee United	29	10	10	9	47	39	+8	40	W W W D W
5 St. Johnstone	28	11	7	10	36	33	+3	40	D W D L L
6 Heart of Midlo…	29	11	6	12	33	29	+4	39	W L L D L
7 Aberdeen	29	7	12	10	29	32	-3	33	D D D D W
8 Kilmarnock	29	7	12	10	31	43	-12	33	D L L W D
9 St. Mirren	29	6	13	10	26	37	-11	31	D D D D D
10 Inverness CT	28	7	6	15	32	49	-17	27	L L D L D
11 Hibernian	29	5	8	16	30	55	-25	23	D W L L D
12 Dunfermline At…	30	4	7	19	30	66	-36	19	L L L D L

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Southampton	35	19	9	7	63	33	+30	66	D W W W D
2 West Ham United	34	19	8	7	54	33	+21	65	D W D W D
3 Reading	34	19	6	9	44	28	+16	63	W W W W W
4 Middlesbrough	34	16	11	7	43	35	+8	59	W W L W W
5 Blackpool	35	15	11	9	58	46	+12	56	L D W L W
6 Birmingham City	33	15	10	8	53	32	+21	55	D L W D W
7 Brighton & Hov…	35	15	10	10	42	36	+6	55	D D W D D
8 Cardiff City	34	14	12	8	52	43	+9	54	D L L W L
9 Hull City	33	15	8	10	32	26	+6	53	D D D D W
10 Leeds United	35	14	8	13	52	49	+3	50	D L D W L
11 Leicester City	34	13	9	12	47	40	+7	48	L W W L W
12 Crystal Palace	34	12	12	10	35	31	+4	48	D W D W D
13 Burnley	34	14	5	15	47	43	+4	47	L L L W L
14 Derby County	34	13	7	14	37	45	-8	46	W D L L L
15 Ipswich Town	34	13	5	16	54	61	-7	44	D W L W W
16 Watford	35	11	11	13	40	53	-13	44	D W L L W
17 Barnsley	35	12	7	16	46	55	-9	43	L D L L W
18 Peterborough U…	34	10	8	16	51	56	-5	38	L L D W L
19 Millwall	35	9	10	16	38	47	-9	37	W L W L D
20 Bristol City	35	9	7	19	31	57	-26	34	W L L L D
21 Nottingham Forest	34	9	5	20	30	53	-23	32	L D W W L
22 Coventry City	35	7	8	20	30	49	-19	29	D L W L W
23 Doncaster Rovers	33	7	8	18	30	54	-24	29	W D D L L
24 Portsmouth	34	9	9	16	34	38	-4	26	L L D L L

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Charlton Athletic	35	23	9	3	64	25	+39	78	L W W W D
2 Sheffield United	34	20	5	9	64	37	+27	65	L L W L W
3 Sheffield Wedn…	35	19	7	9	59	42	+17	64	W D W L L
4 Huddersfield Town	34	16	15	3	65	35	+30	63	W D D W L
5 Milton Keynes Dons	34	16	11	7	63	37	+26	59	L D W W W
6 Notts County	35	15	8	12	51	45	+6	53	D W W W W
7 Carlisle United	33	14	10	9	48	53	-5	52	W L W L D
8 Stevenage	32	13	11	8	47	31	+16	50	D D L L W
9 Brentford	33	12	11	10	46	39	+7	47	W L D W L
10 Colchester United	33	12	11	10	47	46	+1	47	W W D D L
11 Hartlepool United	35	12	9	14	42	45	-3	45	L D W L W
12 AFC Bournemouth	34	12	8	14	38	40	-2	44	L L L L D
13 Oldham Athletic	32	11	9	12	40	48	-8	42	L W D W L
14 Preston North End	33	11	8	14	43	53	-10	41	D L D L W
15 Bury	35	11	8	16	46	61	-15	41	L D L D L
16 Leyton Orient	33	10	10	13	37	49	-12	40	L D D L W
17 Yeovil Town	34	10	9	15	44	56	-12	39	W W L W W
18 Scunthorpe United	34	8	14	12	45	49	-4	38	W W L D L
19 Walsall	34	7	15	12	34	39	-5	36	W D D W W
20 Tranmere Rovers	34	8	11	15	32	40	-8	35	D L L D D
21 Exeter City	35	8	10	17	31	52	-21	34	L D L W L
22 Wycombe Wanderers	35	9	5	21	49	69	-20	32	W L W L L
23 Chesterfield	35	7	10	18	37	57	-20	31	D W L L W
24 Rochdale	35	6	12	17	30	54	-24	30	L D L D D

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Swindon Town	34	22	4	8	60	25	+35	70	W L W W W
2 Cheltenham Town	35	19	7	9	55	35	+20	64	L D W D W
3 Southend United	35	19	6	10	59	40	+19	63	D W L L W
4 Shrewsbury Town	34	18	8	8	50	33	+17	62	D D W L W
5 Torquay United	34	18	8	8	47	36	+11	62	W W L L W
6 Crawley Town	32	16	9	7	54	39	+15	57	D L L D L
7 Oxford United	34	14	13	7	48	33	+15	55	D W D W D
8 Gillingham	34	16	6	12	60	48	+12	54	W W W W D
9 Port Vale	34	15	8	11	56	45	+11	53	W D D W W
10 Crewe Alexandra	35	14	7	14	48	49	-1	49	D D D D W
11 Morecambe	35	12	11	12	52	42	+10	47	W L L W D
12 Rotherham United	34	12	11	11	50	46	+4	47	D D L D D
13 Aldershot Town	33	14	4	15	35	37	-2	46	L W W W W
14 Accrington Stanley	34	11	12	11	41	44	-3	45	D D L L L
15 Burton Albion	34	11	10	13	44	55	-11	43	L L L L D
16 Bristol Rovers	34	11	8	15	41	54	-13	41	L D W D L
17 AFC Wimbledon	34	10	8	16	45	62	-17	38	L L D D D
18 Bradford City	33	8	12	13	41	43	-2	36	D L W D W
19 Macclesfield Town	35	8	10	17	32	43	-11	34	D D D D L
20 Barnet	34	9	7	18	40	62	-22	34	L D L L L
21 Plymouth Argyle	35	7	11	17	38	55	-17	32	W L D D W
22 Hereford United	35	7	11	17	38	58	-20	32	D W L D L
23 Northampton Town	33	8	7	18	43	65	-22	31	W D L W W
24 Dagenham & Red…	34	9	4	21	33	61	-28	31	L W W D L

Greece Super League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Olympiakos Piraeus	23	17	4	2	50	14	+36	55	W W W W W
2 Panathinaikos	23	17	3	3	43	18	+25	54	L W W L W
3 PAOK	23	12	6	5	32	17	+15	42	W D W L W
4 AEK Athens	23	11	5	7	28	24	+4	38	L D L W L
5 Atromitos	22	10	7	5	24	20	+4	37	W W W D L
6 Asteras Tripolis	23	10	4	9	17	20	-3	34	W W W L W
7 Aris	23	8	9	6	22	18	+4	33	W D D W W
8 OFI	23	9	6	8	23	21	+2	33	L D L W W
9 Xanthi	23	8	5	10	24	25	-1	29	L L L L L
10 Levadiakos	22	7	4	11	21	32	-11	25	L W W W L
11 Ergotelis	23	6	5	12	20	33	-13	23	L L D L L
12 Panionios	23	6	5	12	18	24	-6	23	L L D L W
13 PAS Giannina	22	5	6	11	18	26	-8	21	W L L D W
14 Panaitolikos	23	5	6	12	15	28	-13	21	W L L L L
15 Kerkyra	23	5	6	12	21	35	-14	21	W L W W L
16 Doxa Dramas	22	4	3	15	9	30	-21	15	L W L L W

France Ligue 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 PSG	26	16	7	3	48	26	+22	55	W D D D W
2 Montpellier	26	16	6	4	49	26	+23	54	D W D W W
3 Lille	26	12	11	3	45	29	+16	47	D D W W L
4 Stade Rennes	26	12	7	7	36	30	+6	43	W D L W D
5 Saint-Étienne	26	12	7	7	33	28	+5	43	L D W W W
6 Toulouse	26	12	7	7	28	23	+5	43	W W W L L
7 Olympique Lyon	26	12	4	10	41	34	+7	40	L D L L D
8 Olympique Mars…	26	10	9	7	34	26	+8	39	L L L D D
9 Bordeaux	26	9	9	8	31	30	+1	36	L L W W W
10 Evian TG	26	8	9	9	37	37	+0	33	W W W D L
11 Valenciennes	26	8	7	11	27	28	-1	31	D W D W W
12 Brest	26	5	15	6	22	22	+0	30	D W D D L
13 Caen	26	7	7	12	30	37	-7	28	D L W D W
14 Lorient	26	6	9	11	24	34	-10	27	L L L L D
15 Dijon	26	7	6	13	31	45	-14	27	D L W D L
16 Nice	26	6	8	12	25	30	-5	26	W W L D D
17 Nancy	26	6	8	12	24	35	-11	26	W L L L D
18 Ajaccio	26	6	8	12	28	47	-19	26	L W D L D
19 Auxerre	26	4	11	11	32	40	-8	23	D D L D D
20 Sochaux	26	4	9	13	23	41	-18	21	D L L D L

Portugal Premeira Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Porto	21	16	4	1	50	15	+35	52	W W W W L
2 Benfica	21	15	4	2	49	19	+30	49	L D L W W
3 Sporting Braga	21	15	4	2	45	17	+28	49	W W W W W
4 Sporting CP	21	11	5	5	31	17	+14	38	L W W L W
5 Marítimo	21	11	5	5	30	23	+7	38	L W W W L
6 Vitória Guimarães	21	10	2	9	26	23	+3	32	W L W W W
7 Olhanense	21	6	8	7	24	26	-2	26	W D D L W
8 Nacional	21	7	4	10	24	35	-11	25	L W W L L
9 Gil Vicente	21	5	8	8	20	32	-12	23	L D L W W
10 Académica	21	5	7	9	20	27	-7	22	D D L L D
11 Rio Ave	21	6	3	12	21	27	-6	21	W L L W D
12 Paços de Ferreira	21	6	3	12	25	40	-15	21	W L L W W
13 Vitória Setúbal	21	5	5	11	19	37	-18	20	W W L L L
14 Beira-Mar	21	4	5	12	16	24	-8	17	L L D L L
15 Feirense	21	3	8	10	15	31	-16	17	D L D L L
16 União de Leiria	21	4	3	14	19	41	-22	15	L L D L L

...Results...Results....Results.....Results....Results....Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...

EPL
Liverpool 1 - 2 Arsenal
Blackburn Rovers 1 - 1 Aston Villa
Manchester City 2 - 0 Bolton Wanderers
Queens Park Ra… 1 - 1 Everton
Stoke City 1 - 0 Norwich City
West Bromwich … 1 - 0 Chelsea
Wigan Athletic 0 - 2 Swansea City
Newcastle United 1 - 1 Sunderland
Fulham 5 - 0 Wolverhampton …
Tottenham Hotspur 1 - 3 Manchester United

THE CHAMPIONSHIP
Cardiff City 0 - 2 West Ham United
Bristol City 3 - 2 Leicester City
Peterborough U… 0 - 3 Millwall
Derby County 2 - 1 Blackpool
Hull City 0 - 0 Leeds United
Nottingham Forest 1 - 2 Doncaster Rovers
Middlesbrough 2 - 0 Barnsley
Southampton 1 - 1 Ipswich Town
Coventry City 1 - 1 Crystal Palace
Reading 1 - 0 Portsmouth
West Ham United 1 - 1 Watford
Brighton & Hov… 2 - 2 Cardiff City

LEAGUE ONE
Charlton Athletic 0 - 2 Colchester United
Milton Keynes Dons 0 - 1 Yeovil Town
Brentford 2 - 0 Exeter City
Sheffield Wedn… 4 - 1 Bury
Tranmere Rovers 1 - 1 Notts County
Oldham Athletic 1 - 2 Scunthorpe United
Wycombe Wanderers 4 - 2 Leyton Orient
Huddersfield Town 1 - 0 Hartlepool United
Carlisle United 2 - 1 Rochdale
Preston North End 0 - 0 Chesterfield
Walsall 3 - 2 Sheffield United

LEAGUE TWO
Southend United 0 - 0 Crawley Town
Swindon Town 4 - 0 Dagenham & Red…
Gillingham 3 - 1 Barnet
Bradford City 1 - 1 Accrington Stanley
Rotherham United 1 - 1 Crewe Alexandra
Northampton Town 3 - 2 Bristol Rovers
Shrewsbury Town 2 - 2 Oxford United
Macclesfield Town 2 - 2 Hereford United
Torquay United 1 - 0 Aldershot Town
AFC Wimbledon 1 - 2 Plymouth Argyle
Morecambe 3 - 1 Cheltenham Town
Port Vale 3 - 0 Burton Albion

FRANCE
Sochaux 1 - 1 Valenciennes
Saint-Étienne 0 - 2 Evian TG
Nancy 2 - 0 Olympique Lyon
Olympique Mars… 0 - 1 Toulouse
Lille 2 - 2 Auxerre
Dijon 1 - 1 Montpellier
Bordeaux 1 - 2 Nice
Caen 0 - 0 Brest
PSG 4 - 1 Ajaccio
Lorient 0 - 2 Stade Rennes
Evian TG 2 - 0 Olympique Mars

GERMANY
Bayer Leverkusen 2 - 0 Bayern München
Hamburger SV 0 - 4 Stuttgart
Hannover 96 2 - 2 Augsburg
Freiburg 2 - 1 Schalke 04
Kaiserslautern 0 - 0 Wolfsburg
Hertha BSC 1 - 0 Werder Bremen
Borussia Dortmund 2 - 1 Mainz 05
Nürnberg 1 - 0 Borussia M'gla…
Hoffenheim 1 - 1 Köln

GREECE
Panionios 1 - 2 Atromitos
Xanthi 0 - 1 Panaitolikos
Aris 1 - 0 AEK Athens
Asteras Tripolis 3 - 0 Ergotelis
Levadiakos 4 - 3 Kerkyra
Doxa Dramas 1 - 0 PAS Giannina
OFI 0 - 2 Olympiakos Piraeus
Panathinaikos 0 - 2 PAOK
Kerkyra 3-2 Levadiakos
PAS Giannina 1-0 Doxa Dramas

HOLLAND
ADO Den Haag 0 - 0 Heerenveen
VVV 2 - 1 NAC Breda
RKC Waalwijk 1 - 0 Excelsior
AZ 3 - 1 Heracles
Vitesse 2 - 0 De Graafschap
Ajax 4 - 1 Roda JC
Utrecht 0 - 0 NEC
Feyenoord 1 - 0 Groningen
PSV 2 - 6 Twente

ITALY
Parma 1 - 2 Napoli
Udinese 0 - 0 Atalanta
Siena 3 - 0 Cagliari
Fiorentina 2 - 0 Cesena
Lecce 2 - 2 Genoa
Roma 1 - 2 Lazio
Bologna 1 - 0 Novara
Internazionale 2 - 2 Catania
Cesena 0 - 0 Catania
Parma 2 - 2 Fiorentina
Bologna 1 - 1 Juventus

PORTUGAL
Benfica 2 - 3 Porto
SNacional 1 - 3 Sporting Braga
Vitória Setúbal 1 - 0 Sporting CP
Rio Ave 4 - 0 Beira-Mar
Feirense 1 - 1 Académica
Gil Vicente 1 - 2 Paços de Ferreira
Vitória Guimarães 1 - 0 Marítimo
União de Leiria 1 - 3 Olhanense

SCOTLAND
Aberdeen 1 - 1 Celtic
Dunfermline At… 0 - 2 Motherwell
Hibernian 0 - 0 St. Mirren
Kilmarnock 0 - 0 St. Johnstone
Rangers 1 - 2 Heart of Midlo…
Dundee United 3 - 0 Inverness CT

SPAIN
Mallorca 1 - 1 Osasuna
Getafe 1 - 3 Málaga
Rayo Vallecano 4 - 2 Racing Santander
Barcelona 3 - 1 Sporting Gijón
Sevilla 1 - 1 Atlético Madrid
Real Zaragoza 2 - 1 Villarreal
Athletic Club 2 - 0 Real Sociedad
Granada 0 - 1 Valencia
Real Madrid 5 - 0 Espanyol

One Game At A Time

France
Sat 10th Mar
Ajaccio V Olympique Mars…
Brest V Bordeaux
Evian TG V Sochaux
Nice V Nancy
Toulouse V Lorient
Valenciennes V Saint-Étienne
Olympique Lyon V Lille
Sun 11th Mar
Dijon V PSG
Stade Rennes V Auxerre
Montpellier V Caen

Germany
Fri 9th Mar
Stuttgart v Kaiserslautern
Sat 10th Mar
Bayern München v Hoffenheim
Mainz 05 v Nürnberg
Köln v Hertha BSC
Wolfsburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Borussia M'gla… v Freiburg
Augsburg v Borussia Dortmund
Sun 11th Mar
Werder Bremen v Hannover 96
Schalke 04 v Hamburger SV

Italy
Sat 9th Mar
Napoli v Cagliari
Chievo v Inter
Sun 10th Mar
Palermo v Roma
Catania v Fiorentina
Genoa v Juventus
Milan v Lecce
Atalanta v Parma
Cesena v Siena
Lazio v Bologna
Novara v Udinese

England EPL
Sat 10th Feb
Bolton Wanderers v Queens Park Ra…
Aston Villa v Fulham
Chelsea v Stoke City
Sunderland v Liverpool
Wolverhampton v Blackburn Rovers
Everton vTottenham Hotspur
Sun 11th Feb
Manchester United v West Bromwich …
Swansea City v Manchester City
Norwich City v Wigan Athletic
Mon 12th Feb
Arsenal v Newcastle United

The Championship
Fri 9th Mar
Coventry City v Birmingham City
Sat 10th Mar
Reading v Leicester City
Derby County v Watford
Nottingham Forest v Millwall
Peterborough U… v Blackpool
Burnley v Crystal Palace
West Ham United v Doncaster Rovers
Brighton & Hov… v Portsmouth
Southampton v Barnsley
Hull City v Ipswich Town

Scotland
Sat 10th Mar
Inverness CT v Kilmarnock
Sat 17th Mar
Dundee United v Rangers
Sun 18th Mar
Motherwell v Aberdeen
St. Mirren v St. Johnstone
Heart of Midlo… v Hibernian

Greece
Sat 10th Mar
Atromitos v Doxa Dramas
OFI v Panionios
PAOK v Asteras Tripolis
Sun 11th Mar
PAS Giannina v Levadiakos
Kerkyra v Xanthi
Olympiakos Piraeus v Aris
Panaitolikos v Ergotelis
AEK Athens v Panathinaikos

Spain
Sat 10th Mar
Real Sociedad v Real Zaragoza
Málaga v Levante
Sporting Gijón v Sevilla
Real Betis v Real Madrid
Atlético Madrid v Granada
Espanyol v Rayo Vallecano
Sun 11th Mar
Valencia v Mallorca
Racing Santander v Barcelona
Osasuna V Athletic Club
Mon 12th Mar
Villarreal V Getafe

Holland
Sat 10th Mar
Roda JC V VVV
Groningen V Vitesse
Heracles V ADO Den Haag
Heerenveen V Excelsior
NAC Breda V PSV
Sun 11th Mar
NEC V Twente
Feyenoord V Utrecht
Ajax V RKC Waalwijk
De Graafschap V AZ

Portugal
Sat 10th Mar
Marítimo v Feirense
Braga v União de Leiria
Porto v Académica
Sun 11th mar
Olhanense v Nacional
Rio Ave v Setúbal
Beira-Mar v Vicente
Paços de Ferreira v Benfica
Sporting CP v Vitória Guimarães

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